PEE-WEE HARRIS IN DARKEST AFRICA

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

Merry Christmas —
To Leonard A.
From Grant

CHS-④J

500

PEE-WEE HARRIS IN DARKEST AFRICA

PEE-WEE SUBMITTED TO THE ORDEAL OF HAVING HIS PICTURE TAKEN.

Pee-wee Harris in Darkest Africa. *Frontispiece* (*Page* 169)

PEE-WEE HARRIS IN DARKEST AFRICA

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

Author of

THE TOM SLADE BOOKS
THE ROY BLAKELEY BOOKS
THE PEE-WEE HARRIS BOOKS
THE WESTY MARTIN BOOKS

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PEE-WEE HARRIS IN DARKEST AFRICA

CHAPTER I

A TONGUE TWISTER

FOR years Hickson's Crossroads had basked in the sunlight of its pleasant valley heedless of the great world. You shall search for it in vain on the road map; as maps go it was not even a dot. To be sure, it had grown since the days when Josiah Hickson had smoked his pipe on the wooden platform of his general store and gazed at the dilapidated old signboard opposite which informed the passerby that it was nine miles to Bridgeboro.

That sign did not (as so many signs do nowadays) pleasantly inform the traveller of the particular claim to distinction possessed by the town he was approaching. It did not enlighten him with the thrilling intelligence that Bridge-

boro was the home of that redoubtable scout, Pee-Wee Harris. I do not know what was the cause of this singular omission, but it is just possible that it was because Pee-Wee was not yet born. It seems incredible that there could ever have been a time when there was no Pee-Wee Harris but such is the fact. Those were quiet days before the advent of the automobile and the radio, and Pee-Wee Harris.

Since that peaceful era Hickson's Crossroads had grown, but not so rapidly as to be troubled with growing pains. Along both rural crossroads there came to be rows of houses and stores, irregular and picturesque, and these intersecting back roads became Main Street and Hickson Street. The two, with wooden buildings running a half mile or so, formed a cross in the otherwise unoccupied country. It was not the only cross that this unoffensive village was destined to bear.

In the course of time Josiah Hickson's pipe went out and was not relighted. Josiah Hickson himself went out and Mother Hickson also, so even the little graveyard grew in the relentless march of progress. In time the hot dog arrived and the horrible gasoline pump. And then came

Pee-Wee Harris. The violation of Belgium by the Germans was nothing to the invasion of this rural paradise by the terrible scout whose latest triumphs and adventures we are here faithfully to record.

The story begins in "Bennett's Fresh Confectionery" store in Bridgeboro (a very good place to begin) where our hero was pausing for a banana split on his way home from scout meeting. He was bedecked in the flaunting regalia which he customarily wore to scout meeting including his belt-axe and his compass, though indeed no compass was necessary to guide him to Bennett's. He could have gone to Bennett's with his eyes closed.

Dangling from his belt was his scout jackknife, his belt-axe, a miniature first aid kit and a fountain pen containing the juice of an onion instead of ink. This was for purposes of secret communication incidental to Pee-Wee's dark and mysterious activities in the field of scouting. He had somewhere read that onion juice was invisible upon the written page until held over a fire when, obedient to this toasting process, it became visible in clear brown hue. Never in all of

Pee-Wee's colorful career had this device worked, but he still sedulously filled his pen with tears streaming down his frowning countenance and carried it wherever he went.

On this particular Friday night that frown which customarily cast its threatening shadow over Bridgeboro was even more portentous than usual. For Pee-Wee was meditating a "dandy scheme." At scout meeting that night he had read an announcement that thrilled his very soul. It was in the form of a monthly bulletin from National Scout Headquarters and was tacked upon the troop room wall. As Pee-Wee gazed upon this he felt that at last his day had come and that glory was knocking on his door.

It read as follows:

SCOUTS ATTENTION

GRAND DRIVE FOR MEMBERSHIP

GO GET 'EM!

Scouts, do you want to join the GO GET 'EM campaign? Do you want to be a GO GETTER and get 'em? It takes a scout to catch a scout. A good scout scouts out scouts for scouting. If every scout secured a scout it would double our membership. Think of that! There are more fellows outside of scouting than inside.

Get busy and turn the outside in!

There's only one thing better than a scout and that's two scouts.

If they try to stay out I won't let 'em;
I'll chase 'em and grab 'em and fret 'em;
I'll say it's a go and then off I will go;
And I'll be a go-getter and get 'em.

See if you can remember that. Scout for scouts. A scoutish scout scoutishly scouts the unscoutish thought that he can't scoutishly scout out scoutish scouts for scouting.

GO GET 'EM

It had been the cunning intention of the scout authorities to phrase this summons to action in such a way that it would fix itself in the heedless minds of young missionaries, to catch and hold them with a tongue twister, and the success of this sly verbal adventure was nothing less than sensational in the case of our sturdy little hero. For Pee-Wee's tongue became weirdly involved even in ordinary conversation. In the field of difficult quotation it was pretty sure to run utterly amuck. That was partly because Pee-Wee commonly used his mouth for two purposes simultaneously—talking and eating.

Since recruiting scouts by the most despotic method was his speciality he saw in this call from headquarters the opportunity of his life. He had been a missionary and organizer on a small scale. He had formed the Alligators but they had all waddled away. He was the genius of that astonishing patrol, the Hoptoads, but this was an enterprise achieved at Temple Camp and when the season ended the Hoptoads all hopped away to their distant homes leaving their leader quite alone. He had then browbeaten a hopeless pair of twins and several admiring youngsters and

welded them into the famous Chipmunk Patrol which had disintegrated after a brief and glorious career under the great scout maker.

So at last this redoubtable little adventurer, having, so to speak, used up all the small boys of Bridgeboro, returned to the fold to fill a vacancy in that hilarous aggregation the Silver Foxes. "The only way to get rid of him is to take him with us," Roy Blakeley, the leader, had said, "When he's very near you don't hear him so much because he deadens his own sound. And besides he's going to Africa; maybe we won't hear him while he's there, especially if the wind isn't blowing this way."

Pee-Wee did really intend to go to South Africa but of course everybody took that as a joke. He intended to be one of the fortunate boy scouts to accompany the adventurous Martin Johnson expedition into the African wild. As all boys who have read *Safari* know, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson are the famous pair who have spent much time in the African jungles photographing wild animals for motion picture purposes and in the interest of science. Two boys were to be selected to accompany the party on its

next sojourn. Hundreds of Eagle and Honor Scouts were making application. Pee-Wee had decided to be one of these two boys. His original idea had been to be both of them, but he had not been able to figure out just how he could do that.

CHAPTER II

AT THE COUNTER

BUT now for the time being, the Martin Johnson expedition was relegated to the rear in Pee-Wee's active mind. The bulletin had caught his interest. As he strode along the almost deserted Main Street toward Bennett's he thought of a "dandy scheme." He planned (or to use his own favorite expression invented) an enterprise which would assure him of favorable consideration by the powers that be in scouting. With such prestige as he should win as a "go-getter" how could they do otherwise than kneel at his feet and beg him to accompany the Martin Johnson Expedition?

"Geeeeeee whiz," he mused as he strode along with a darkly ruminating scowl on his round face, "I can scoutch I mean scout out a lot of scoutch—scouts—for scouting all right. *Geeee whiz,* leave it to me. I can get as many as a—a hundred fellows, maybe even fifty, that's easy. I bet I'll

have my picture in *Boy's Life* on account of how I'm a propagater* all right."

In the quiet of the darkness outside of Bennett's Fresh Confectionery stood a small farm wagon hitched to a lanky horse. It was piled with empty crates and upon the rough board seat dozed the proprietor of this ramshackle outfit. On the side of the wagon was crudely printed:

CLAUDIUS TIBBELS

Fresh Farm Products

HICKSON'S CROSSROADS

NEW JERSEY

Plunk in the middle of the sidewalk lay a fugitive apple which had probably rolled out of the wagon during the delivery of fresh farm products to Schmittenberger's Home Market, next door to Bennett's.

Pee-Wee picked up the apple and approached the dozing figure on the driver's seat. He knew that this nocturnal visitor having disposed of his load was simply pausing before returning to his rural paradise. "Hey Mister," he ventured, "can I have this apple? I found it on the sidewalk."

*He probably meant propagandist.

"Why not?" answered the drowsy figure without rousing himself in the least.

Pee-Wee did not know any reason why not and he strode into Bennett's munching the apple and sat down on one of the revolving stools before the delectable soda fountain. Beside him was perched a small brown faced boy eating a plate of ice cream. The jovial, white aproned Mr. Bennett smiled down upon our hero from across the counter and the little boy cast furtive glances sideways, duly impressed and a little fearful of the martial splendor of the scout. He was, withal, a sensible little boy and he wondered why Pee-Wee wore an aluminum frying pan dangling from his scout belt. But he did not dare to ask.

Pee-Wee, however, was neither bashful nor reticent. He had with him in conspicious view every facility of self defense—jackknife, belt-axe, even a can opener, though his most potent weapon, his tongue, was at the moment engaged in a terrific assault upon the apple.

"Give me a banana split with a lot of chocolate on it," he demanded. "Put two spoonfuls on like you do for Roy Blakeley because he said you did."

"How are you going to eat a banana split and an apple at the same time," Mr. Bennett asked.

"Goodness gracious, he can do that," chirped Mr. Bennett's fifteen year old daughter from the rear of the store. "Roy Blakeley says when he eats an apple he always eats the core first so nobody will ask him for it afterwards."

"That shows how much of a fool girls are," Pee-Wee roared, the while wrestling with the apple and the banana split, "that they listen to his crazy nonsense and anyway girls don't know anything about food they're so smart they don't know anything about it because they can't tell mushrooms from toadstools and I can prove it even I know what's a good antidope for getting poisoned by toadstools only I don't do it because I'm a shout I mean——"

"I'll say you are," chirped the girl.

"I mean a *scout,*" he shouted, trying to talk and eat the apple and the banana split at the same time, "and anyway I brought more scouts in here than any other fellow did I'll leave it to Mr. Bennett, and I'm going to bring a lot more in because I'm starting to be a go gettem getter (a large bite of the apple) and I'm going to start

in (a generous spoonful of banana split) and scoutch out scoutishly out for scouting—right away I'm going to start."

By this time Agnes Bennett had come around behind the counter for she, like everyone else, enjoyed seeing Pee-Wee in action. "Isn't that just *scrumptuous?*" she said.

Pee-Wee contemplated her, his mouth dripping with chocolate gravy. He sensed her mischievous spirit of ridicule (he was always on his guard against girls) and was particularly aroused to combat by reason of the diminutive admirer who almost forgot his ice cream in his awe of the hero.

"Even they're afraid of boats, too," he managed to ejaculate through his preoccupied mouth, "and mice too especially rats, they scream when they step into them."

"I never stepped into a mouse," said the girl.

Mr. Bennett smilingly poured a little more chocolate over Pee-Wee's plate as if to enliven him to further exhibition.

"I'm going to bring a lot of fellows in here," Pee-Wee said as he shovelled up the luscious concoction with assaults on the apple at intervals.

"If they try to stay out I won't get 'em—let 'em —I'll say it's a go and I'll—I'll what it says—I'm going to scoutch the thought (a huge mouthful), so I'm going to scoutchingly scoutch the unscoutly —scout, *thought.* I'm going to scout it that I can't scout it for scoutishly scouts out scoutishly for scouts—SCOUTING! I'm going to go and get a lot of members. That shows you what a lot of sense girls haven't got," he confided to the little boy next to him. "That they're all the time giggling; even at camp they're afraid to sit down on account of ants and crickets especially spiders —even they don't know that spiders have six eyes."

"That's better than having six tongues," Agnes Bennett observed.

Contemptuously Pee-Wee now subsided into rapid assault on his banana split. "I'm going to scout thoughts all right that I can scoutch—scoutch—ishly I'm going to scout out scouts for scoutchingly—so do you want to join my new patrol? It hasn't got any name yet——"

"It hasn't got any existence yet," said Agnes Bennett.

"Sure it hasn't because it isn't started," Pee-

Wee said in his consuming preoccupation with the diminishing split. "I don't have to bother with an existence at the start, do I?"

"Oh goodness, gracious me, isn't he *excruciating!*" the girl managed to say in her uncontrollable mirth. "And where did you get the idea about scoutching out scoutish thoughts that you'll scoutishly—oh, I think he's just too cute!"

"It's on a bulletin," Pee-Wee said darkly, "It's on a bulletin at scout meeting how I got to go get 'em it means scouts to be members——"

"Now finish the apple, then tell us," the girl slyly suggested.

"Did you think I wasn't going to finish it?" Pee-Wee roared at her.

"Oh, I never *dreamed* such a thing," said the girl.

CHAPTER III

CLAUDIUS TIBBELS

THE little boy was greatly awed by Pee-Wee. But he was awed too by the mirthful girl who laughed so freely at this martial hero. For himself it was all he could bring himself to do timidly to address the scout. And he deferred doing even that until Pee-Wee, his mouth dripping with gooey chocolate, strode out of the store which he honored with his patronage. The little boy followed him and was emboldened to make the only claim that he could think of to this masterful and gorgeous missionary of scouting.

"I'm—I'm not scared of spiders," he said, "I —I just as soon pick one up, honest I would. Could—maybe could I be a member of those scouts? I ain't scared of snakes either. So maybe could I join?"

"You got to be scared of some kinds," Pee-Wee thundered at him. "Boa-constrictors, you

got to be scared of these. And cobras too, they live in India."

"Then why do I have to be scared of them?" the timid little boy ventured. "Do I have to be scared of snakes that live in India?"

Pee-Wee did not know of any answer to this poser so he said, "Maybe they might move over here."

"If I'm not scared of skunks could I join?" the little boy asked. "I'm not scared of rattlesnakes either. So could I join because I killed a rattlesnake and there ain't any scouts where I live—that's my father waiting for me in that wagon. That's where I live, in Hickson's Crossroads. So if you're going to go get 'em, would you please maybe get me, because I want to join?" If he was not afraid of snakes he was certainly afraid of Pee-Wee and he showed it as he stood on the sidewalk trembling with new born hope while the drowsy Tibbels senior aroused himself and gazed rather impatiently down upon the two as they talked. "Can you join if you don't live in a town, because I could come here on the bus?"

"You mean you haven't got any scouts in Hickson's Crossroads?" Pee-Wee shouted.

"No but we got a lot of fellows and I can show you where there's a woodchuck hole too where it comes out in two places and the school teacher wishes we'd have some scouts and she's nice—she wouldn't laugh at you. If she writes you a letter will you let me join? Because now I got to go home with my father."

It was well known of Pee-Wee that he was lucky. And never had luck smiled more kindly on him than now. Here indeed was an opportunity to *scout out scoutish scouts for scouting.* Here was the chance to *go-get-em.* Here was a benighted village, with snakes and skunks to be sure, but no scouts.

"Didn't I track a fox almost there?" Pee-Wee demanded by way of establishing a claim upon the village. "You can ask Harvey Willetts if I didn't. Only it was a wheelbarrow instead of a fox but anyway a fox drags his tail and it looks like a wheelbarrow—I tracked it all the way to the river. Geeeee whiz, lots of times I was in Hickson's Crossroads. You leave it to me, I'm coming there to scoutch—I mean scout scoutishly for scouting. Even I got to turn the place inside out, I mean outside in, because that's what it says

on that bulletin. I'm coming there right away tomorrow and I'm going to start a whole patrol there and maybe we'll call it the Woodchucks on account of that woodchuck hole there, and you can be the assistant patrol leader and that means you'd be the *really truly* patrol leader pretty soon because I'll be away off in Africa and you can be the patrol leader till I get back and maybe we'll call it the lions or the giraffes or something like that, because I'll be hunting those and we'll have our meetings in the school house because school teachers got to stick up for the scouts and help them and we'll scoutish scout out thoughts that we can't do it, there are more scouts outside scouting than in so it says I got to turn everything inside out I mean outside in—I'll show you, you leave it to me."

Little Claudius Tibbels gazed astonished at this human thunderstorm in scout attire. He felt somewhat as the mischievous boy feels who slyly rings a fire alarm and then beholds the noisy engines descending upon him from every direction. He was aghast at the upheaval he had caused. He had indulged the hope that he might be accepted into the scouts; he had not expected to be

made partner in an organizing enterprise in his quiet village. A timid, unobtrusive boy, he was somewhat afraid even of the Hickson's Cross-roads younger set who were now summarily to be drafted into scouting. And he, poor little Claudius Tibbels (Tibby as they called him) to be elevated to leadership while his enterprising chief was in Africa!

"I'm afraid they won't mind me," he modestly suggested. "Maybe I better join your patrol—maybe."

"They'll mind you if I tell 'em to; you got to mind your superiors, that's what it says in the rules. And they've got to join too because they've got to have civilized pride, I mean civil, I mean civic. If a town doesn't have any scouts that shows it hasn't got any civilized pride. So I'll come down there tomorrow."

"Maybe they won't let you start a patrol," the fearful Claudius said. He was himself somewhat the object of ridicule in his quiet village; he had not thought that the consummation of his fondest hope would be accompanied by any such local upheaval as Pee-Wee evidently contemplated. He was terrified by the tremendous en-

terprise of this terrible scout. His father had quite subsided into sleep again and the poor little boy lingered still to say, "They're kind of strict sometimes they are, in that village. Maybe they won't let you turn it inside out. You got to get permits for everything there. There was a circus coming next Saturday and they won't let it come because a boy down there ran away with a circus last year. So they dassen't come any more now, the Mayor says so. Maybe, could I join your patrol, hey?"

"That shows how much of a lot they don't know," Pee-Wee thundered. "Do you mean to tell me they're the boss of the scouts? That shows! It shows they're crazy about circuses too. I'll fix it about the circus, you leave it to me. Because, *geee whiz,* they got to listen to a boy scout. So I'm coming to your town and I'm going to turn it inside out, it says I got a right to do that—the bulletin."

This was rather a free interpretation of the bulletin and the fearful Claudius stared aghast. He did not care to ride into scouting on the crest of such a tidal wave. He was just a simple, unobtrusive little country boy who had dreamed of

joining the scouts. He would have liked to do this without its being known to his comrades.

"You leave it to me," Pee-Wee said. "I'm going to start a dandy patrol in your village and you can help me scout outch—scout outch—get a lot of fellows into scouting. And I bet I can fix it about the circus too because even I was mayor of this town for one day in Boys' Week. So do you think I can't handle Hickson's Crossroads? *Geeeeeeee whiz!*"

Little Claudius Tibbels had seen Pee-Wee "handle" and annihilate a banana split and an apple simultaneously. With his terrible frown, his dangling assortment of appalling implements and his deafening voice he seemed to poor little Claudius quite able to handle anything.

"You ain't boss over rules are you?" he ventured timidly to ask. "They've got rules now against circuses coming."

"You leave it to me," Pee-Wee shouted; "because I know how to talk to civilized authorities —you leave it to me. I'm coming on Saturday."

This would have given Hickson's Crossroads time enough to move away. Without much trou-

ble the whole village could have effected a retreat through Babcock's Woods. Or they could have burned their town as the people of Moscow did on the approach of Napoleon. But they did nothing and they took the consequences.

CHAPTER IV

PEE-WEE AND ROY

PEE-WEE was a sort of visiting celebrity in the Silver Foxes. He had sought refuge in this hilarious fold on the disintegration of the Chipmunk Patrol of which he had been the autocrat. He now made known his tremendous enterprise to Roy Blakeley whose quiet home he invaded the following afternoon. Roy and Warde Hollister were sitting in Roy's tent on the spacious lawn indexing a stalking album. "Here comes an apple with Pee-Wee behind it," said Warde.

Pee-Wee was always precipitate in his announcements. He never led up to startling revelations by easy stages. "I'm going to leave the Silver Foxes," he shouted breathlessly. "I've got a dandy big idea so I'm going to leave the Silver Foxes."

"Is that a promise; can we depend on it?" said Roy.

"I got a big scheme," Pee-Wee enthused.

"He's called to a wider field of uselessness," said Warde. "Break it to us gently, kid; what it is?"

"Don't smash it, just break it," said Roy. "I was hoping for this. It will be your daily good turn to your patrol, scout. No one will be sorrier than I am that I'm glad you're going to leave us. This is a terrible blow—to whoever you're going to tie up with. Stand near the microbephone and tell us the glad tidings, and give us a bite of that apple, will you? Here, give us it, you can't eat while you're breadcrusting."

"Did anybody ever tell you you're crazy?" Pee-Wee demanded.

"They don't have to tell me," said Roy gaily, "its conceded by a unanimous minority. Everybody told me—even more people than that. When are you leaving us, and if so why not?"

"He's not happy in the nickel plated foxes," said Warde.

"I got an inspiration out of that bulletin," Pee-Wee vociferated. "And last night on the way home I was thinking about it how I'd scoutch, *scout,* and I stopped in Bennett's——"

"For a banana splitch?" said Roy. "Right the first time."

"Will you shut up till I get through!" Pee-Wee roared. "That's one of the reasons I'm getting out of this patrol because you don't have any sense with all your crazy nonsense, do you call that scouting?"

"That's a pretty good argument, Roy," said Warde.

"Ask me another answer and I'll give you the question to it," said Roy. "There are more fellows outside of scouting than inside. The boy sprouts have more non-members than any other organ or brass band or anything, I mean organization; that's a lot of bull from the bulletin. What's the idea, using our tent?"

"Will you keep still while I tell you!" Pee-Wee shouted.

"We'll keep still and we'll keep our tent too. The only thing he's willing for us to keep is to keep still. Go ahead and when you finish be sure to stop."

"I'm going to Hickson's Crossroads on Saturday," said Pee-Wee, subsiding somewhat but still excitedly, "and I'm going to start a patrol there,

I'm going to scout thoughts I mean scouts out for scouting I'm going to scout them like it says and start a patrol——"

"You're missing on two cylinders," said Warde.

"Pee-Wee is entirely right," said Roy, all the while busy with his index, "except for the static. What he means is that a scoutish sprout sloutishly shouts out undoubtishy the thoughtch that he can't stoutishly rout out more from the outsidishy to get them inside——"

"Will you shut up!" Pee-Wee screamed. "Do you call that a language!"

"I'm a scout and I don't call names," said Roy.

"He's got a very severe attack of the poster," said Warde.

"Sure, he's got posteristis on both sides of his tongue," said Roy.

"And I'm going to go to South Africa too!" Pee-Wee fairly screamed. "I'm going to get selected because I formed a whole patrol all by myself like I'm going to do and I'm going to get my picture in the newspapers because how I'm chosen to go with Martin Johnson on account of what I do for scouting. So now you know why

I'm leaving this patrol and they're all crazy anyway and they're not a real patrol with all their crazy hikes and jollying new scouts with nonsense."

"Those are harsh words," P. Harris," said Roy.

"Anyway you know the rule," Pee-Wee said; "how it's a troop rule—you know what Mr. Ellsworth said—that one patrol has got to help another——"

"There isn't any other," laughed Warde.

"There is!" Pee-Wee roared, "and I want the tent because you've got to do a good turn to another patrol that's starting Saturday because that's the rule like Mr. Ellsworth said."

"Maybe we'll come down there Saturday and take a look," Warde said.

"If you come down there with a lot of your nonsense you'll be sorry for it," said Pee-Wee. "If you come down there and start being an obstacist——"

"A which?" said Roy.

"It's Latin for obstructionist" said Warde.

"If you start a lot of obstacles you'll be sorry,

for it, that's all I've got to say," Pee-Wee threatened. "If you come there while I'm scouting scoutish—you know what I mean and start shouting——"

"You mean shoushing," said Roy.

"—you know what I mean the way you do, if you start that, telling them you get the life saving badge by eating peppermint life savers like you told Shorty Cullen—if you do that—if you tell 'em a life scout is one that sacrifices his life——"

"I will tell them nothing but the truth; a scout's honor is to be toasted, law one. That's Pee-Wee's favorite law because it reminds him of toast, especially toasted marshmallows. Do you mind if I tell them that a scout must be helpful —law three; how he has to help himself to four helpings of dessert? That shows how much I know about the scout law, hey Warde?"

"Some patrol leader we've got," Warde said.

"Shall we let him have the tent?" asked Roy.

"Sure," said Warde.

"Will you promise to set it up so the inside of it faces the wind?"

Pee-Wee was too much interested in getting it to be annoyed. "Sure, you bet I'll take good care of it," he said.

"And you're leaving the Silver Foxes forever —perhaps even longer?"

"But anyway I'm in the troop still," Pee-Wee consoled.

"Not so terribly still," said Warde.

CHAPTER V

BEN MAXWELL

Of the defunct Chipmunk Patrol there was one scout survivor besides Pee-Wee, and that was Ben Maxwell. Ben was one of Pee-Wee's real discoveries, a tall, easy-going, humorous boy who had tried to keep the outlandish Chipmunk Patrol in order and had constituted himself a sort of advisor to its despotic leader. He had derived a good deal of quiet amusement from this self-sacrificing task. He had never appeared in the least embarrassed at being affiliated with these bewildered youngsters, nor in the least discouraged when the patrol evaporated. "Well, that's that," he had said to Pee-Wee when the mother of the Jansen twins had summarily withdrawn them from the patrol because one of them had eaten the root of a stinkwood upon Pee-Wee's representation that it was a nourishing Indian herb much relished by lost and starving wanderers in the wilderness. "The trouble with Mrs. Jansen

is that she is too much civilized," Ben had said.

It was to this solitary and loyal survivor of the lost patrol that Pee-Wee now betook himself with his new enterprise. For Pee-Wee knew that people always took Ben seriously; he had conferred dignity on more than one of Pee-Wee's astonishing undertakings. When grown people (parents in particular) frowned upon his bizarre endeavors the redoubtable little scout could point to Ben Maxwell, who indeed had often acted as official intermediary between him and troublesome guardians. But best of all Ben had a Ford which was now to be commandeered in the cause of scouting.

"Listen," Pee-Wee said before he had even crossed the threshold of the beautiful Maxwell home where he was always welcome. "Didn't I tell you we'd get even a better patrol started—didn't I? Do you remember that officious poster at scout meeting last night?"

"That—oh, you mean the official poster? Sure, it's a good one. I've been lying awake trying to say the blame thing——"

"I can say it," Pee-Wee interrupted; "a sproutish I mean a scoutish scout flouts I mean scouts

the unscoutly-ish thought that he can't scoutishly scoutch out scoutish scoutch—I mean scout out —scoutishly—for scouting scouts——"

"Perfect," said Ben, "and when are we going to start scoutching them?"

"You have to bring your car and I've got a tent," vociferated Pee-Wee, "and we're going to Hickson's Crossroads on Saturday very early so you have to get up early and we're going to camp there all day and I'm going to get a whole patrol, you see, I'm going to get anyway six fellows because there are no scouts in that village and already I've got one—his father is a farmer. So that makes only five I have to get because you and I and that fellow make up eight. Then I'm going to write to National Headquarters and tell them how I went by the posters and I bet they'll print my picture and I bet I'll be one of the scouts to go on the Martin Johnson Expedition to Africa because, *geee whiz,* they'll have to listen to me then. So don't you think it's a good idea?—and I invented it. Only we have to think up some things to do that are kind of wild so they'll see what scouts are. And we'll take some frankfurters and cook them too, hey—and waffles."

"Do you think that waffles would be wild enough, kid?"

"I can make pudding out of moss, maybe that would be better, only we have to have some milk out of thistles to put on it. So then they'll see how we don't depend on civilization."

"I a little lean toward waffles, kid."

"So will you go?" Pee-Wee besought anxiously. "And we'll get that bulletin and hang it up outside the tent, hey? And I want you to be there so in case Roy Blakeley hikes down there with a lot of his crazy nonsense interfering with us, you can help me handle him. Geeeeee whiz, I had enough of that patrol, telling me there was a bat up in a tree and I climbed up and it was a baseball bat that was stuck up there when Dorry Benton threw it up to knock down apples—do you call that scouting? So will you go down there with me on Saturday and stay all day? Maybe we'll camp over night, hey?"

"We'll stay till Hickson's Crossroads surrenders, kid."

"Because if I start a patrol in a town where there never were any scouts, then I'm kind of

like—sort of kind of like Columbus, hey? Maybe that'll start a lot of troops there, hey?"

"Come around about seven o'clock Saturday morning and I'll be ready," said Ben; "we'll carry the gospel to the heathens."

"And I'll bring my cooking set too, hey? And shall I bring my megaphone?"

"Absolutely."

"Maybe we'll get enough fellows for two patrols, hey? It's a dandy big megaphone."

"That would be thirteen boys," said Ben, "that's an unlucky number. We'd better watch our step."

"Geeeee whiz, we should worry," said Pee-Wee. "Didn't I eat thirteen wheat cakes at Temple Camp and even I didn't have any bad luck, maybe it was because I ate two more so as to get away from thirteen—safety first, hey?"

"Then it wasn't thirteen at all, it was fifteen," Ben laughed. "All right, kid, be around here good and early Saturday morning and I'll be ready for you. I'll have Lizzie all cleaned up."

"Won't that be a good stunt, starting a couple of patrols in a town where there aren't any scouts

at all?" Pee-Wee enthused. "We'll put Hickson's Crossroads on the Scout map all right, you bet, won't we?"

"That's what we will."

"I'm the one that discovered Hickson's Crossroads," Pee-Wee continued, his hopeful enthusiasm mounting. "Even they're so slow there that they wouldn't let a circus come to the town even. They dassen't give a show there because the mayor won't let them have a permit, so that shows what they are."

"Well, we'll try to make up for the circus," said Ben. "We'll have a one-scout circus."

"And I've got a dandy idea," said Pee-Wee excitedly. "I'm going to have you fall out of a tree or something and kind of not exactly really break your arm only just hurt it, and then I'm going to give them a demonstration of first aid and I've got a medal that says *Join the Scouts* and we can stamp it on toasted marshmallows and give them out for souvenirs that we toasted over a forest fire so they can see how we're kind of primitive—how we can light a fire without matches."

It never occurred to Pee-Wee that the printing

on the medal would appear wrong way around when impressed upon the marshmallows. But then everything was wrong way around with Pee-Wee. He was going to South Africa by way of Hickson's Crossroads. His disasters were all triumphs. When he got on the wrong train it took him straight to Paradise. It made no difference where he fell since he always landed right side up. Once he tried to jump across a chasm and missed it, alighting in a peach tree at the bottom. He was the only scout at Temple Camp who proved without the corroborative testimony of a companion that he had hiked to Bee-hive Tree in the woods (the first-class test destination) by returning with the stings of seven bees upon his round countenance. Such conclusive evidence could not be ignored. Even the bees were his witnesses and friends.

CHAPTER VI

THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

EARLY Saturday morning our missionaries set out for the benighted village. Their departure was shrewdly timed at an early hour to escape the mocking throng headed by Roy Blakeley. Ben had not neglected to decorate his precious old Ford, as only a Ford can be decorated, with slogans and bizarre invitations to Join The Scouts. *We are scouting for scouts,* one of these read, while another made a direct appeal to the boy's hunger, reading *Joining the scouts is as easy as pie and pie is a feature of scouting.* Another advised *Don't get into a stew because time hangs heavy. Get a hunter's stew into you by joining the scouts.* Upon the rattly old hood was the flaunting declaration *It's better to be a hiker than a piker. Join the scouts. Don't read about adventures—live them,* said another. Still another read *Hit the scout trail. Campfire yarns are better than apron strings,* still another de-

clared. *Here's your chance, don't miss it. Be a he-boy and join the scouts,* was chalked across the rear curtain. From a staff rising above the radiator cap waved the flaunting emblem of the First Bridgeboro Troop resplendent in a steaming spray at times for the radiator of Ben's Ford had a habit of boiling over for no reason at all.

The contents of this martial chariot baffle description. As for Pee-Wee, he wore every appurtenance known to scouting. In a large canvas bag were his aluminum cooking set and his first aid kit, appropriately carried together so that an unwary victim of our hero's cooking might be promptly rescued by suitable remedies. Among other instruments of conquest was a battered wash boiler which had been donated to scouting after a long career in the Harris kitchen. This was to demonstrate the difficult art of kindling a fire in a pelting rain. The bottom of it was punched full of holes and the boiler being filled with water and held aloft on a makeshift frame, deposited its contents upon the scout beneath while he triumphed over this artificial shower by kindling and nursing an infant fire amid the downpour. Coiled up within this tin thundercloud of Pee-Wee's in-

vention was a few feet of dilapidated garden hose used to replenish the shower. The only thunder that he carried was his own voice.

"And I'm going to show them how to tie knots too," he said, as he climbed into the seat beside Ben; "I got a lot of clothesline. And I'm going to show them about conversation too." He could certainly do that.

"You mean *conservation?*" laughed Ben.

"And forest fires and how you don't start them and put them out—I'm going to."

"We'll get 'em," Ben encouraged.

"*Geeeeee whiz,* they wouldn't even let a circus go in that town," Pee-Wee scorned.

"Well, there's a circus on its way there," Ben laughed.

"You mean us?"

"That's what."

"We don't have to have any license," Pee-Wee said, "because scouts are kind of like officials kind of; a town has got to listen to scouts, hasn't it?"

"If it isn't deaf it will," said Ben. "How about the village green; isn't that a good place for us to set up? Good central location, huh?"

"Sure that's dandy because—especially because

there's a pump there so I can give a demonstration."

The village green did seem the ideal spot. It was a little grassy triangle formed by the crossing of three roads, with Hickson's village store (conducted by the grandson of the original Josiah) conveniently close at hand. Several large maple trees shaded the spot, on one side of which stood an antiquated pump, relic of a bygone day. But it still worked, pouring forth a crystal stream out of its thin lead pipe nozzle, in obedience to the creaky old handle. A cocoanut shell cup hung on a cord from the unpainted and weatherbeaten old affair, and a leaky, mossgrown horse trough still stood below on its crude rocky foundation. At a corner of the little green, where the Bridgeboro and Tootleville roads crossed was a modest granite memorial to the seven heroes of the village who had served in the World War. Six of them had returned; the other, Daniel Dobbins, was lying at rest somewhere in Flanders Fields, nobody knew where. Every year, on Decoration day, old Garrison Dobbins from the mansion up on the hill came down and laid a wreath on this rough hewn stone with its bronze tablet.

Here it was, on the village green, that our conquering heroes pitched their tent on that bright and momentous Saturday morning. Here it was that Hickson's Crossroads found them when it came down to Hickson's General Store to get its mail. They saw the Ford drawn up under one of the spreading maple trees that overhung the old dirt road and noted with rustic curiosity the rope with which the waggish Ben had tied his patient equipage to the old hitching post. One by one they strolled over, attracted by Ben's rolling blackboard, and gazed upon its garish summonses to scouthood. They walked around the tent and paused before its open flap to read the poster which had inspired Pee-Wee's mighty enterprise and baffled his equally mighty tongue. "Wot in all tarnation is that there?" inquired Seth Henshaw. "Scoutin' out Scoutin'—*what the dickens is it?*"

"We're scouting out I mean scoutchingly scouting the scouting—scoutish thought—I mean for scouting!" shouted Pee-Wee at the top of his voice. "Can't you read what it says?"

"I reckon I can but I can't jes say it," replied the patient Seth.

"You can't say it yourself," spoke up a boy of about fifteen, resplendent in a gingham shirt and suspenders.

"I can *be* it and that's better than *saying* it," roared Pee-Wee. "There are more scouts outside of scoutish, I mean *inside* I mean scouts inside outside——"

"Hey there, he says scouts are inside out," commented a rustic bystander, at which there was a general laugh.

"The one that laughs last is the best," screamed Pee-Wee. "Do you know what that poster means?"

"Golleys, it's a tongue twister," said a man who was honestly striving to master it.

"It means that if you scout a thought," Pee-Wee yelled, "it means that if you scout a thought——"

"You mean *shout* a thought," some one interrupted.

Ben took the stand, which was a grocery box with JOIN NOW printed on it. "We're here to start—scout—excuse me—We're here to start a scout troop in this village. I seem to have a slight attack of that poster myself. It's time you fel-

lows of Hickson's Crossroads got busy and joined so you can start and have some fun. We're down here to start a new troop and any fellow that wants to join can step right inside the tent and sign his name and we'll tell him all about it and what to do next. Just step inside, any fellow that's between twelve years old and eighteen years old, and take a squint around. You'll see Indian arrowheads and handicraft work—bird houses and birch bark things——"

"I made a lot of them myself," Pee-Wee shouted, "and already I ended three patrols and there's lots of more things to eat in there——"

"Goodness, did he eat those patrols?" a rosy faced country girl asked.

"Step right in," said Ben, "and see how a scout sleeps and eats——"

"Especially eats!" shouted Pee-Wee. "And I'm going to give a destination, I mean demonstration, how we can start a fire even when it's raining and I'm going to give out toasted marshmallows so don't go away. And snakes too, how you don't have to be afraid of them, and herbs and everything and how you find trails, so don't go away. Now's your chance if you want to join

the boy scouts and be primitive like Daniel Boone and Buffalo Bill and have a lot of resources so you don't depend on civilization, and woodcraft and everything, especially going camping in the summer."

At this point our vociferous missionary espied little Claudius Tibbels standing shyly in the background with two other boys whose gaze was fixed upon Pee-Wee in a kind of awe. The timid little fellow had already won these tentative recruits and had been waiting since early morning for the arrival of the great organizer. Even their astonishment at the tongue-twisting bulletin was diverted by the terrible voice of this militant visitor.

"You got to have civical pride, so you got to start a troop in this town," Pee-Wee was shouting, "and I got a camera and after I get eight fellows to sign their names I'm going to give out toasted marshmallows and then I'm going to have our picture taken and it's going to be published in the scout magazine. Even it shows how much scouts amount to, how they got something to say like police and everything because I was mayor of Bridgeboro for a whole day, you can

ask this fellow if I wasn't, because he was in my last patrol. So every fellow that wants to join the scouts, now is his chance and he can go away camping in the summer and everything and trail after wild animals and save scouts from drowning and all like that." He paused, came up for air.

Most of the grown-ups who had at first been attracted by these unexpected visitors upon the village green had departed, seeing that it was a boy's affair. A few lingered in a kind of imperturbable astonishment at Pee-Wee's tirade. One by one these also wandered away until only a dozen boys or so, one frankly skeptical little girl, and an imposing-looking man remained.

This man was clearly not of the Hickson's Crossroads breed. The gaping boys who stood about seemed awed by his presence and were thus deterred from familiar advances into this enchanted realm of scouting. Ben looked at him rather puzzled, as well he might, for the man, who was short and fat, had an extensive curled mustache and wore a shabby high hat and a vest patterned after a checker-board. His cutaway coat was of blue velvet, decorated with shiny gilt

buttons and he wore a watch chain which could have safely held captive a grizzly bear.

Only Pee-Wee faced this sumptuous personage undismayed from his grocery box throne. Being himself a faithful devotee of noise, he was not in the least appalled by the stranger's motley apparel. Moreover, his own scouting apparel, with its dangling appurtenances, bespeaking the primitive life, was not conceived in the spirit of simplicity.

"Do you want to give some money for the scouts?" he called to this elegant loiterer. "Because you got a right to help them along if you want to. I'm starting a troop, so who wants to join and come tonight and have a campfire dinner and hunters, stew and everything?"

Little Claudius Tibbels and his two rather hesitant comrades stepped forward. Not so another boy, somewhat older, whose demeanor was cynical; he had not been impressed by the allurements of hunters' stew and marshmallows. "It's a lot of bunk," said he. Thus encouraged, another boy was moved to observe, "not me; do you think I want to be dressed up like a Christmas tree?"

What verbal torrent Pee-Wee might have poured out upon this recreant onlooker was stayed by the imposing gentleman who stepped forward with an extremely formal and condescending air, at which Pee-Wee was highly flattered, and grasped the vociferous promoter of scouting by the hand. Standing upon his grocery box he was higher than this gorgeous applicant for favor who shook his hand with such vigorous cordiality that our hero toppled off his throne.

CHAPTER VII

A BARGAIN'S A BARGAIN

"My young friend," said the stranger in a mellow and resonant voice, as Pee-Wee regained his feet and arranged his somewhat disordered decorations, "you are a true leader and a showman after my own heart. You are a master hand at publicity; I wish you all success. Don't be disheartened by the chilly reception accorded you by a rustic municipality."

"I started three patrols already," said Pee-Wee, responding proudly to the fluent stranger's comment.

"The next start will be home," observed a boy.

"You won't start one here," a more serious young bystander commented.

"We ain't going to join your crazy club," said another. "All you know how to do is shout."

There were now a dozen or so boys standing about and with the exception of the meek little Claudius Tibbels and his two prospective con-

verts their attitude toward our hero and his enterprise was decidedly unfavorable. Seeing this, even one of these reluctant applicants backed away and shook his head, confiding to the embarrassed Claudius, "I don't want to join." The other one, too, began to give disconcerting signs of rebellion. Nay, Claudius himself seemed on the point of an inglorious retreat.

"It's a lot of crazy stuff," said one boy.

"You got to learn things out of a book," said another.

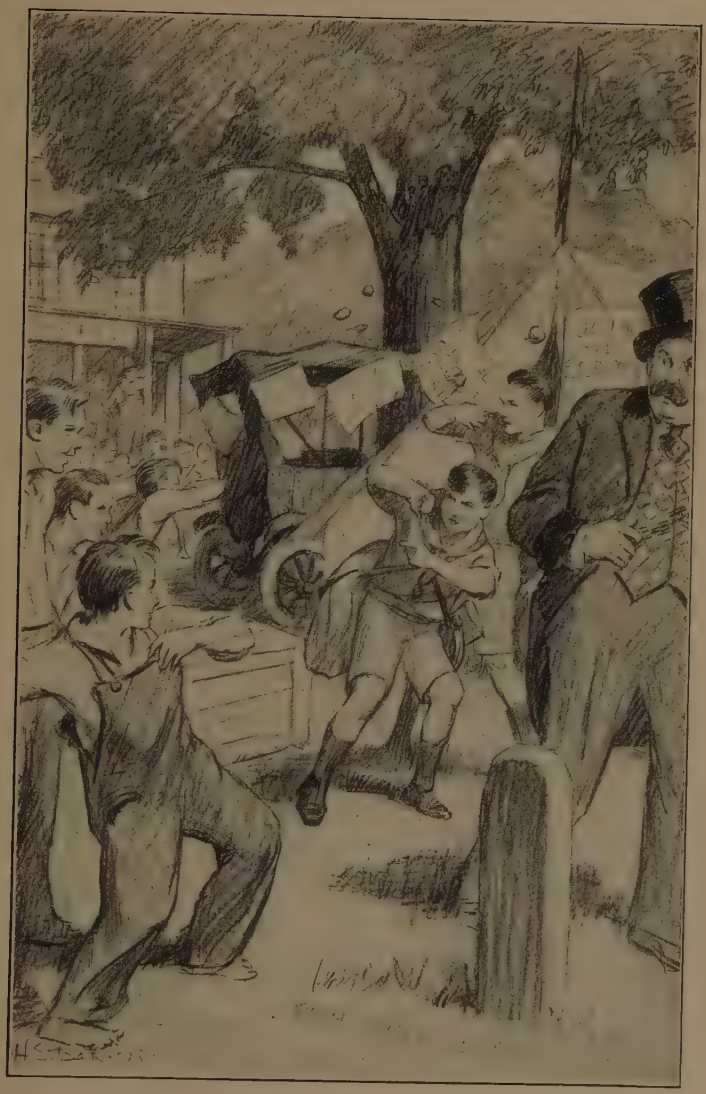
"Come on, let's go play ball," a disgusted onlooker shouted.

"Come ahead fishing," suggested another.

"What do we want to look at birchbark things for?" still another said sneeringly.

A boy with tanned and lowering countenance who had been standing in contemptuous silence now expressed himself most potently by throwing a rotten apple at the official poster, following this seditious action with a sneering summons to his comrades to "Come ahead and let's go swimming, there ain't no fun hanging around here. I'm sick of the whole berg, I am."

It was indeed a dark moment for scouting;



THE REBELLION WAS NOW IN FULL SWING.

Pee-wee Harris in Darkest Africa. *Page* 50

Pee-Wee surrounded by scoffers, even Ben laughing. He had hoped to enthrall these rustic youths with amazing demonstrations and the ever potent seductions of scout-cooked food. But you see these were country boys who knew how to swim and fish and were at home in the woods, and they had a kind of countrified contempt for all this vain show. I dare say that the cause of scouting was never in greater peril. Clearly, in dealing with such a public, Pee-Wee would have to offer something big, irresistible. He would have to *show* what a scout could be.

It was the gorgeous stranger who afforded him the opportunity. "My dear young friend," said he, placing a protecting arm around Pee-Wee's shoulder and speaking in his rolling, melodious voice, "I have myself just encountered a set-back at the hands of the powers that be in this benighted village. Don't be discouraged, you are among the Philistines. My name is Alonzo Costello, proprietor of Costello's Mammoth Circus, exhibiting in every town and hamlet throughout the length and breadth of the land, welcomed everywhere as the most gorgeous spectacle extant with a menagerie of over a hundred beasts of the

jungle and the highest paid performers, clowns, equestrienne marvels, midgets, giants, educated seals, and a pair of elephants imported at a cost of twenty thousand dollars, to say nothing of Costello's Concert Band and a sideshow in which the laws of nature are suspended by a group of unbelievable marvels—astounding, awe inspiring, *appalling.*"

Pee-Wee stared aghast. Even the mocking recreants to scouting were caught by this flowing tirade.

"And what was the answer here in Hickson's Crossroads?" Mr. Costello contemptuously demanded. "The presiding dignitary of this municipality has turned a deaf ear to my request for a permit to exhibit our aggregation of world wonders and staggering marvels of mirth and melody to the Hicksville public. Our caravan, carrying the most worthy assemblage of artists ever brought under a single spread of canvas, has been halted at the threshold of this town. My young friend, scout as was Daniel Boone, also Buffalo Bill whom I well knew, you are up against the same difficulty as I have encountered. Permit one

who is a captor and exhibitor of wild life to extend his fraternal sympathy. The kingly roar of the lion has been drowned by the braying of the donkey. We are therefore proceeding to Skunk Hollow where I am sure we will be welcomed. Good luck to you, my little man."

Pee-Wee was not to be outdone; he would show that the roar of the lion or the screeching of the scout, could be raised above the braying of the official donkey. "That shows how much they don't know in this community I mean town how they're not interested in wild animals like scouts are supposed to know all about—even chipmunks I know why they always move their nests twice a year and snails too I know all about them and I came here to scout out scoutch I mean scoutishly scout out scoutish thoughts—scouts—that I can't scout thoughts I mean scouts for scouting and it shows how much they don't know about Roosevelt and all men like that, that they stand around when he's a shout I mean scout I mean he *was! Geeeeeeeeee whiz!*

"Go on, keep it up," one of the boys encouraged.

"He's enough of a circus," said another.

"How about grasshoppers, do you know about those?"

"He can tame wild flowers, he's so smart."

"What's that tin pan hanging from his belt for?" another asked. "Maybe it's a fly swatter when he goes after wild life."

"Did you ever fish for fish-cakes?" asked another young humorist.

"What's the old washin' boiler for?" another asked. "Maybe he's going to show us how to pick blackberries."

"Hey, scout, you want to watch out you don't get bitten by snakeroot."

The rebellion was now in full swing with even little Claudius Tibbels on the verge of desertion. It was a historic moment in the history of scouting. Other boys arrived and joined the bantering throng. If this thing continued National Scout Headquarters itself would be threatened. They threw stones at the wash boiler, emitting from it metallic thunder instead of rain. With deadly pebbles they produced melodious chimes upon our hero's dangling frying pan. An aged tomato suddenly plastered itself on the side of Ben's car

where it looked like the setting sun, obliterating the garish propaganda which was chalked there.

Thus it is that great world conflicts start. But Pee-Wee Harris, scout of scouts (six or eight scouts in one, in fact), was a diplomat as well as a warrior and be it said to his eternal glory HE SAVED SCOUTING. His heroic name should be graven on every scout biscuit, it should go forth indelibly impressed on every ginger-snap that accompanies scouts on their hikes. Above all, it should be printed on every animal cracker.

"All right—all right!" he shouted in a kind of menacing challenge. "If you think all scouts know is about animals and primitive life and things like that, I'll show you how they've got civilized authority——"

"He even admits he's civilized," a bystander laughed.

"Even I can *prove* it!" Pee-Wee screamed, "because I was boy mayor for a day in Bridgeboro, you ask this fellow if I wasn't, even I stopped a sewer, I mean how I signed a paper that they couldn't do it. I'll show you if you can make fun of boy scouts—*I'll show you!* I'll show you I can get a permit for that circus—*I'll*

show you! And if I do that will you join the scouts? Will you come to my big aggeration—meeting? Will you?"

"He's going to nail old man Dobbins!" screamed a boy with delight.

"Oh, *boy!*" commented another.

"Sure we will," said a tall boy; he was amused but less hilarious than the others. "If you do that we'll say you can handle wild life all right, because old Mayor Dobbins is *one grizzly bear.* You do that, kid, and we'll join up—that's a go."

"Sure it is," chimed in several others.

"Will you come to the meeting to-night?" Pee-Wee demanded.

"You can count on all of us for the scouts if you come out alive after seeing old man Dobbins," said the tall boy.

An uproarious chorus of agreement followed this stipulation. It seemed that, after all, these mirthful and mischievous loiterers were to get some real fun out of Pee-Wee and his enterprise. Our hero had been goaded into exploitation of his civic influence by the banter aroused by his show and claim of affinity with wild and primeval things. Very well, he would show another side

of scouting in which he excelled; he would show that scouts are taken seriously in the executive chamber and the legislative halls. Had he not been an official in the Bridgeboro Clean Up Campaign? Had he not been a junior traffic cop at school dismissal time? Had he not represented the local scouts in the state wide rally? He would show these mirthful Philistines that he was just as much at home in "handling" officials as he would be among the roaring lions in South Africa where he intended later to sojourn.

"A bargain is a bargain," said he. *"I'll show you!"*

CHAPTER VIII

OLD MAN DOBBINS

"Do you think they mean it?" he asked Ben as they trudged up the hill to the formidable Dobbins' mansion, followed by a hilariously mocking throng. Poor Mr. Costello, somewhat embarrassed by this turn of affairs, accompanied the clamorous group. He knew perfectly well that nothing was to be hoped for from Pee-Wee's flaunting boasts; he was a little sorry that he had lighted the fuse of that mighty spirit.

"Gee-whiz," said Pee-Wee scornfully, as he strode boldly with Ben and Mr. Costello beside him and the clamorous group surrounding him, "*I* don't have to have any permit to scoutch for scouts; that's no fair, because anyway circuses are all right—geee whiz, you can't stop a circus."

There was certainly one circus that could not be stopped and that was Pee-Wee. Like a conquering hero he marched up the hill to the palatial mansion where the autocrat of Hickson's Cross-

roads held sway. At the very threshold his mocking followers thought he would falter, but he did not. It was they who faltered and lingered outside with the magnificent Mr. Costello, while Pee-Wee, accompanied by Ben, ascended the porch and rang the bell.

Old man Dobbins owned a lot of mills and was very rich. He was tall and gaunt and of a threateningly severe aspect. Being the employer of everybody at Mill Junction and of many at the Crossroads, and the largest taxpayer in both places, he was naturally mayor, and he ruled with an iron hand. He was gruff and peremptory of manner, hard and grasping. He was also justice of the peace. He owned all the houses at the Junction in which the mill people lived; he owned the co-operative store; he owned everything and everybody, body and soul. The tradespeople who delivered supplies "up ter the mansion" approached with a tremor and chatted furtively with the servants about the master. None of these good people ever personally encountered him in his home. But they voted for him when he ran for Senator; they knew what was well for them.

Once and once only had these simple villagers trodden the forbidden gravel walk up to that spacious entrance and boldly rung the bell. That was when the county paper published the news that young Daniel Dobbins was among those "lost in action" in France. They had all contributed to buy a large wreath and with this kindly and patriotic excuse they went up to the stricken home and were gratefully received.

No one, except Mr. Costello, had been exactly surprised at the official inhospitality toward the "mammoth show." They all knew old man Dobbins's aversion to itinerant amusements which tempted the mill people to take an afternoon off. They accepted his dictum as a matter of course. They had seen this sort of thing before. Old man Dobbins would have prohibited a rainbow from appearing if he could have done that, and kept the mill people from looking out of the windows. Pee-Wee's mocking followers had no vain hopes, but they did expect to get a little entertainment from our hero's summary eviction from the holy temple.

But the scout who was not afraid of lions and poisonous snakes was assuredly not afraid of a

mill proprietor. And he marched unabashed, with his faithful aide, into the august presence, having first held parley with a uniformed and astonished butler.

Old man Dobbins sat at a huge table covered with papers and our visitors had to wait till he had finished talking on the 'phone before he recognized their presence by saying with a kind of brisk gruffness, "Well sir, what can I do for you?" He went right on opening letters meanwhile and did not pay the ex-head of the Chipmunk Patrol the tribute of even a casual inspection.

But the sturdy little scout whom he ignored was a master diplomat. They said of Pee-Wee, that he always hit the nail on the head—by accident. "I bet I know whose picture that is hanging up there on the wall, I bet I do," said he. "I bet it's the same fellow that's got his name on the stone down there on the green. And besides, I know because he had khaki on just like I have." Kings and emperors, ambassadors and presidents, have spoken with less unconscious tact than this!

Old man Dobbins did not look at Ben and Pee-Wee, but he swung around and looked at the oil

painting on the wall. And now there was just the least little approach to cordiality in his voice and manner as he said, "Well, maybe you win your bet; what's the matter with khaki?"

"Did I say there was anything the matter with it?" said Pee-wee. "Is that—that picture—is it your son?"

Old man Dobbins went on ripping letters open with a big bronze knife. "Yes sir, that's my son and he's lying in France. Now what do you youngsters want?"

"I bet maybe you might maybe possibly be wrong," said Pee-Wee with innocent boldness. People were not in the habit of telling old man Dobbins that he might be wrong; not even that he might *maybe possibly be wrong.*

"No I'm not wrong," said the old man wistfully, "I'm not wrong; I wish I were."

Pee-Wee had not come to discuss these matters but he was always ready to prove his point, and he said, "I bet maybe you might be wrong and I can prove it. Maybe he isn't over there at all; maybe he's here. Maybe he's the unknown soldier."

For the first time old man Dobbins laid down

his letter knife and sat back, looking straight at Pee-Wee. What he saw was just a little round faced, curly haired fellow in khaki carrying conspicuously displayed all the familiar accessories of scouting, belt-axe, frying pan, compass, jack-knife, and a willow wood whistle of home manufacture for reproducing the call of the chipmunk, the creature for which Pee-Wee's late patrol had been named. There was as little reticence about his regalia as there was about his speech.

Old man Dobbins smiled ever so slightly, "I never thought of that," he said in a low voice. "Yes, that might be."

"So anyway will you give a permit to the circus to come here?" asked Pee-Wee abruptly.

Old man Dobbins glanced at Pee-Wee quizzically tolerant. He could not see the connection between his lost son and a circus permit. But what he did see, standing unabashed before him, made him just a trifle indulgent. In the same moment when his son was mentioned he could not order this sturdy little applicant from the house. Ben Maxwell was wise enough to remain silent.

" 'Fraid we can't do that," said the old man.

"I bet if that fellow that got killed in the war asked you to, you would," said Pee-Wee.

This was taking a cruel advantage of the crusty old autocrat, hitting him in a weak spot. "I bet if he was back here again, I bet you would," the little torturer persisted. "I bet you would, wouldn't you? *Geeeee whiz!*"

"Well—perhaps. Who are you anyway? Do you belong here at the crossroads?"

Pee-Wee had not the slightest objection to answering this query. "I came from Bridgeboro to start a dandy big drive scoutching, scouting out scouts for scouting. A scoutish scoutch *scout* scoutishly shouts I mean scouts the scoutish *unscoutish* thought that he can't scout outch——"

Ben put an end to this ghastly struggle while the astonished old man Dobbins looked on with furrowed brow. "A scoutish scout scoutishly scouts the unscoutish thought that he can't scoutishly scout out scoutish scouts for scouting."

"That's it," said Pee-Wee, "I bet you can't say it."

"I don't think I'll try," said Mayor Dobbins slowly.

"If you do I bet you'll stay awake all night try-

ing to say it. Anyway it means I got to get a lot of scouts and I'm going to show—they're so fresh—I'm going to show them that I can get a permit, because I was boy mayor of Bridgeboro for a day—I was My Honor, they called me. So gee whiz, if I can do that, I mean get a permit, then they'll see they got to laugh on the other side of their faces at boy scouts that even Roosevelt was one—even Daniel Boone only he's dead. So will you give me a permit, they're so fresh and I'll show them. And then they'll all come to my meeting and you can come too if you want to and see them enroll and I'm going to give demonstrations. Gee whiz, everybody thought I'd be ascared of you because you're a magnet*, but gee I'm not, so will you give a permit and help the Boy Scouts?"

Who shall say what caused this crusty old despot to waver? He was wavering, for he did not order them out. He sat there frowning down on his littered table and twirling his bronze paper cutter. "The boy scouts, huh?" he mused aloud.

"Sure, and I'll do something for you some day," encouraged Pee-Wee.

*He probably meant magnate.

Still the old man sat looking at him with furrowed brows.

"I—bet maybe you heard about the scouts, hey?" Pee-Wee encouraged.

"I've certainly heard one of them," old man Dobbins said.

"That's nothing, even I can talk more than that," said Pee-Wee. "Do you want to hear me make a call like a chipmunk?"

"N-no, I'd rather just hear you make a noise like a scout. And so you're both scouts, huh?"

"Sure," said Pee-Wee, "and you got to have civilized pride, I mean civic, and have them in every town, so that's what we came down here for and if I get up a troop maybe I'll get things printed about me in *Boy's Life* magazine and I can go to South Africa with an expedition maybe. So if you gave a permit for that circus then they'd see that I amount to something how I can do things and they'd all join, so will you do it and help the Boy Scouts and I'll do something for you some day because maybe you might lose a dog or something and I could trail him and that plate with all the soldier's names on it down at the green is all kinder got moss and dirt on it and I'll

clean it off and polish it all up dandy if you want me to, so your son's name will all shine out. That's the kind of things scouts do. And they know how to not get poisoned by mushrooms too, they know about herbs and everything, and I started three patrols already."

He paused for air while old man Dobbins gazed rather curiously upon him. Then he fell to gazing at his paper knife. Then he twirled it in his hands. Then he looked sideways at Pee-Wee. "So that's the kind of things you fellows do, huh?"

"Sure, that's good turns."

Old man Dobbins ruminated for a few moments. "Well," said he finally, "you clean off and polish up that bronze tablet and I'll give a permit for the circus. I'll give it into your hands right now. And you'll have the laugh on all those fresh young dubs and I hope it will do them some good joining your gang. If they'd clean up that tablet now and then like you scouts, or whatever you call yourselves, it wouldn't hurt them any. You tell them when you get them all rounded up and they've all signed on the dotted line. Now is that all right, Mister Ex-mayor of Bridgeboro?"

Pee-Wee's eyes were dimmed. As he glanced up at the portrait on the wall it seemed to him that the dead soldier boy was winking down at him as if to say, "We know how to handle this crusty old codger."

But of course this absurd illusion was caused by the little scout's brimming eyes.

CHAPTER IX

THE MIRACLE SCOUT

"I THINK that was a wise crack bringing in the soldier and the war memorial, kid," laughed Ben as they went out. "Anyway, you sure got away with it. We'll have the gang with us now, all right. We've scoutched out the whole outfit at once."

Of course Pee-Wee had only stumbled into his triumph. He had not planned that knockout blow. He was far too innocent deliberately to spy out and use the weak spot in this gruff old despot's armor. But there was something about Pee-Wee; he always blundered in the right direction. Even the older Ben knew that the encounter was safe in the hands of his sturdy little leader.

But just the same, Pee-Wee took full credit. He thought he had succeeded in this perilous business because he had once been Bridgeboro's boy mayor for a day!

"Gee whiz, don't I know how to handle grown up people, all right?" he vociferated. "Mayors and everything, don't I know how to handle them, especially mothers and fathers; even stepfathers I can handle them."

"You're all right, kid," said Ben.

"So now we got a good start, hey?"

"That's what. We ought to line up a three-patrol troop on that. It was a home run."

"I invented it," said Pee-Wee.

It did indeed seem that good fortune was at last smiling on this redoubtable little missionary. He was assured an audience for his extraordinary program of scout demonstrations, and once those demonstrations were seen, the refractory younger set of the benighted Hickson's Crossroads must fall, dazzled by the marvels of scouting, bloated with hunters' stew, and drugged with toasted marshmallows.

Mr. Alonzo Costello, who prated so glibly of marvels, was now to be treated to a free demonstration of one of the miracles of scouting. The boys, apprehending Pee-Wee's utter failure, had gone away, all except the faithful little Claudius Tibbels who lingered to witness the wrathful dis-

missal of his hero. To him was vouchsafed the thrilling joy of seeing the circus permit waved triumphantly in air and handed to the amazed Mr. Costello.

"Now you see what scouts can do!" Pee-Wee thundered. "And you can go and tell them to come like they promised at seven o'clock to-night and put their names down that they'll join the scouts and I'm going to have scout games and everything, especially how to not get starved if they're lost in the woods and how to stalk birds when you have to be very quiet, so you tell them to come at seven o'clock and I'm going to have a campfire."

Here again spoke the true scout missionary, luring with the mention of food. Surely Pee-Wee, of all people, could show them how not to starve. Though how he could show them how to stalk birds *being very quiet* is not easily explained. At all events little Claudius Tibbels hastened off with the glad tidings from his conquering hero.

"My little man," said Mr. Costello in his most elegant manner, and rolling voice, "You have achieved the impossible; I thank you, I thank you from my heart. I have a giant eight feet two

inches tall, but you are greater than he in all his might——"

"Size don't count," Pee-Wee shouted. "Geee whiz, you got to know how to *do* things, good turns and everything."

"Whenever you look at a merry-go-round, think of him, Mr. Costello," said Ben. "He's got as many good turns in him. The only reason he didn't stop the World War was because he was away in the country when it started."

"Thank you, thank you again," said the delighted showman, the while examining old man Dobbins' hasty scrawl somewhat doubtfully. It seemed too good to be true; it almost savored of the supernatural.

"It's all right," said Ben, "don't go in there yourself, he might take it back. He did it for the kid, I mean the Boy Scouts. It's all O K, don't go hunting for trouble. This is Scout Harris, the world-renowned sleight-of-hand performer."

"And the boys of this town will rally to his standard," said Mr. Costello. "Your advertising poster is a masterpiece; read it and you can't get away from it. If you have anything to exhibit

you must tell the world, you must print it and shout it."

"That's the way I do," enthused Pee-Wee.

"And now good day to you, and all good fortune to the Boy Scouts of America. You have done me, I may say, a good turn which is a *marvel.* When I called upon our friend, the mayor, I found him, to put it plainly, a bear. More than that, I would say a *grizzly* bear. And I can add that I know a bear when I see one, having purchased one of the most ferocious at a staggering cost. As one old showman speaking to another, I thank you and I bid you good morning."

"I got up a scout saxophone band, too," Pee-Wee shouted after him.

"Well, kid," said Ben as they started back to the green, "that was sure one good turn, all right —*some stunt.* It will do the trick for us, all right. *And how!*"

"Don't he talk fine?" said Pee-Wee. "Gee, he talks dandy."

"Now to get ready for seven o'clock," said Ben. "I think the best way to do is to give a few stunts first—first aid and things like that——"

"Sure and then—I got a peach of an idea—then I'll stick my spotlight in your face and you'll make believe you're sunstruck and you'll fall right down kerflop and then I'll show them what we do for——"

"N-not so good," said Ben. "I'm afraid I couldn't *kerflop* just right. We'll give them a demonstration of climbing; I'll go up one of those elm trees with one hand in my pocket—that's good stuff, and then——"

"And then you'll see a snake up there getting ready to steal the eggs out of a bird's nest—shut up till I finish—and we'll put the hose up there, we'll wind it around a branch and that'll be the snake and you can show how you know how to grab it and you can—wait a minute—you can bring it down and then I'll show how I know how to make a belt out of a snake's skin and all of a sudden I'll squirt water on the snake so as to——"

"How are you going to squirt water on the snake when the hose is supposed to be the snake? That's punk, kid, now wait a second——"

"Listen," Pee-Wee shouted, "listen!"

"All right, shoot."

"All of a sudden I thought of it. If a scout has been eating toasted marshallows he's got all powder like on his fingers so that we can give a demonstration of getting fingerprints—we can show how we can trail him that way."

"The marshmallows' trail," laughed Ben. "I'm not so stuck on that either. Well, anyway, after we give our exhibition of scout stuff——"

"Listen, listen!" Pee-Wee fairly screamed.

The patient Ben paused.

"Now I know a dandy one. All we got to have is a maiden."

"A maiden!"

"Sure, it's the same as a girl—listen. We got to show how we're good chivellers—listen."

"Oh, chivalry?"

"Sure, toward girls. So do you know spiders are fond of music?"

"I think I heard that. But they only like good music," Ben added, sensing the drift of Pee-Wee's inspiration.

"A girl's in the tent," said Pee-Wee," and she's screaming because there's a big black spider on her. And I'm outside of the tent lying down on account of I fell from the tree and sprained my

ankle. So I got to do a service to a girl and I don't know how to do it. All of a sudden I have some scout resources and I take out my harmonica and start playing it and that will—maybe it will draw the spider away, because I read that spiders go where there is music, I read it in a Natural History. So that shows resources, how a scout thinks right away quick, and it shows chivalry like it says in the Handbook."

"What would you play?" Ben asked, trying his best not to laugh.

"The only thing I know how to play is *Yes we have no bananas,*" said Pee-Wee. "And I know where there's a dandy big black spider and I can put him in a marmalade jar till we're ready. He's right down alongside of that war memorial, he's got a web there."

"I'm afraid you'd have to have a patriotic tune for a spider like that," said Ben. "One who lives right next to a war memorial. Now listen, *I've* got an idea. We said we'd clean off that bronze tablet and polish it up, didn't we? That was a bargain with the old gent. All right, I say let's do that first, right away quick. Then we'll fix up our program for tonight."

"Wasn't that a peach of a dandy thing I thought of how that fellow might be the unknown soldier?" Pee-Wee vociferously demanded.

"That sure was a knockout," said Ben. "It got him, all right."

CHAPTER X

READY

THEY had the afternoon to themselves and they cleaned off the plate on its low rock, Hicksville's modest tribute to her overseas boys. Moss had crept up over the edge of the bronze tablet and a patch of purple had spread across one corner obscuring part of the few names. This they pulled away and trained around the edge of the rough stone so that it would not soon trespass again among that little galaxy of heroes. They did better than this; they built a little low rustic fence around the rock, an attractive specimen of scout handiwork, proving that Pee-Wee's flaunted belt-axe could be used for other purposes than striking terror to trembling beholders.

And they polished the plate. How the names stood out—shiny against the less polished background! Where had they gone, those boys whose names were now made clearly legible by these

two visiting scouts? Egbert Saunders had gone out west. Wilbert Cather had not been able to conquer the spirit of adventure which war inspires and he had gone to South America and cast his lot with a plotting band of insurrectionists. Colly Tod had gone to sea. Haystack Hilles, as they used to call him, was in New York. And so it went. None of them had been able to settle down in old man Dobbins' mills. It was said that Kinky Hickson's girl was still waiting for him to send for her, on some ranch or other in Montana. How they will wait! You see there was nothing to do in Hickson's Crossroads; no *life,* no excitement—nothing. Even pretty Catherine Dobbins only came home to rest, from boarding school or from the shore. She was "bored to death in the poky old place."

Only one of these soldier boys who had gone off singing on a transport had found a quieter place than Hickson's Crossroads in which to rest. And that was on Flanders Fields, where the poppies grow.

And Hickson's Crossroads had neglected, if not forgotten, her heroes until Pee-Wee Harris of the scouts brought those names out into the light

of day. People would look at this memorial now; it wouldn't furnish much excitement, but they at least could read the names. And Pee-Wee would furnish excitement.

"If we can't bring back soldier Danny, at least we can bring back his name," said Ben, as he rubbed away. "How's that—nice and shiny? DANIEL DOBBINS. We'll make that the shiniest one of all, on account of Old Crusty, huh? He's probably forgotten all about us by now."

But Old Crusty had done nothing of the kind; at least he had not gone back to opening letters. He had swung around in his big leather chair and for a few moments sat there looking at the picture on the wall. He did not often do this. He was a busy man and a hard man and not given to sentimental indulgence. But on this occasion, for some reason or other, he sat there looking at the portrait. For Pee-Wee Harris of the scouts had started a train of memories and vain musings. Danny would some day have inherited Knoll House and the mills, things worth living for. The old man thought of these things.

And there crept into his mind a certain day, long, long ago, when Danny had come running in

saying that he wanted to join a scout troop down in the mill section, and he had told Danny to keep away from the mill section and all its allurements. These were his own employees, the mill people. He had refused Danny a bicycle on which he might ride to and fro between the Crossroads and this rural slum. Of course the old man had forgotten all about the scouts, but Pee-Wee's boastful visit recalled them to him. And so he sat there musing wistfully. And this was while Pee-Wee and Ben were shining up that very name of Dobbins which was the terror of Hickson's Crossroads, all the way down to the Mill Center.

You see old man Dobbins had always been accustomed to having his own way (until he met Pee-Wee) but he could not shake his fist and bluster at death, nor at fate. All the boys returned but Danny, and old Garrison Dobbins couldn't make a regulation or a rule about it and stick it up in the employees' entrance of his mills. He wished now that he could go back to that day when he had stormed about the bicycle.

Yet Ben Maxwell was right in saying, "He's probably forgotten all about us by now." The

old man had been caught by Pee-Wee, but he doubtless was off the hook again in fifteen minutes, and off to the mills to storm and bluster. He had been *weak* to give the permit, but he certainly would not be haunted by his weakness.

"If he should come down here and see us he'd probably chase us out," said Ben. "I hope he's forgotten all about us—we should worry."

During that afternoon autoists passing through Hickson's Crossroads glimpsed strange sights at the village green. Some even paused to note the stage setting of the great membership rally to be held at seven sharp. They were greeted with the demand "Do you want to help the scouts?" The green was like a little storm centre because, though there was not much traffic through Hickson's, such traffic as there was, was sure to be here, no matter where it had come from or where it was going, the triangle being formed by three roads.

Above the tent floated the emblem of the First Bridgeboro Troop, and at either side of the entrance were the pennants of the Chipmunks and the Hoptoads, Pee-Wee's defunct patrols. Dangling from one of these was the tongue-twist-

ing poster which had caused our hero more trouble than all his scout tests. Within were a couple of boards laid on grocery boxes on which were displayed odds and ends of rope complicated in the various knots known to scouting. Here also was a book for the solemn act of enlistment, but every applicant would also be required to sign his name on a piece of birchbark. Here also were specimens of handicraft bird houses and mountain staffs, and one of Pee-Wee's famous suction pads for holding one's balance when walking on narrow cliffs and ledges. This was a bit of shoe leather fastened to a stout cord which, when wet, stuck like glue. Pee-Wee had never tested its reliability except on the curb in front of his house and on that occasion it had betrayed him shamelessly, precipitating him into the gutter. But he still trusted it and would have used it on the Alps.

It was outside the tent that the really primitive character of scouting was manifested. Under a spreading elm tree where the shade had prevented the grass from growing, a rustic circle of stones enclosed the hallowed area of the scout campfire. Here would be bodied forth the very

essence of woodland sentiment. Here the happy new recruits would sprawl about that very evening and listen to the great organizer's yarns of Temple Camp.

But that was to be the last thing on the program. Before that, while the daylight still lingered, there were to be scout games, and thrilling demonstrations of scout prowess—stalking, climbing, first aid, and of course lemonade. Late in the afternoon, for stragglers were expected before the appointed hour, a modest blaze was to be kindled on which to toast a whole bucketful of snowy marshmallows, each to be stamped with a genuine scout symbol JOIN THE SCOUTS. It would be wrong way around, but what difference would that make when the luscious morsel was consumed? There is no right and wrong in the scout stomach.

Nestling amid the caressing branches above this little fire was Pee-Wee's wash boiler ready to let loose its torrential downpour. The garden hose wound its tortuous way up to this makeshift raincloud; the lower end of it was fastened to the pump nozzle at which the faithful Ben was to be stationed. A word from Pee-Wee and

his trusty lieutenant would precipitate the most sensational downpour since the days of Noah's Ark. Amid this pelting shower Pee-Wee would show how a scout can kindle a life-saving blaze even in the blighting rain; a blaze that can signal for help in the trackless forest, and cheer and feed the starving wayfarer in the depths.

Feed him in particular. For with the masterful kindling of this second blaze, which would mount into the crackling campfire of the evening, was to be cooked the savory hunters' stew for which Pee-Wee was known (and dreaded) at Temple Camp and Bridgeboro.

Now the hunters' stew is the very flavor and essence of scouting. You can flavor it with chocolate if you like, but that is unusual. Citronella, intended for discouraging mosquitoes, was once used by our hero, but that was by mistake. You stir your MIXTURE up thoroughly using plenty of salt and pepper, then introduce any and every kind of vegetable together with chunks of meat. This should be reduced to stew consistency with hot water, and when the mixture has divided itself into golf balls, you may eat it if you are brave enough. Black hunters' stew derived its

name at Temple Camp by reason of a bottle of ink being poured into it by Roy Blakeley, (supposing it to be tomato ketchup). It was never popular.

Pee-Wee intended also to make tenderflops, an edible fashioned upon the idea of a glass paperweight and deriving its name from the words flip-flop and tenderfoot. They are sometimes called granite fritters and are made with eggs and indian meal and gumdrops; they are fried in a saucepan and eaten with the aid of jackknife and belt-axe.

Pee-Wee had decided that owing to the favorable turn of affairs they would camp overnight on the green so as to give the newly formed troop a glimpse of scout fraternal life as revealed by the late dying campfire.

At about four o'clock he began toasting marshmallows and giving them the official stamp. For it is a scout's duty to be early prepared. These he spread temptingly, on a board. But up to half past four no one had arrived except an aimless cow which, straying from her homeward bound herd, swished the marshmallows away with her tail and knocked the board over.

"It's kind of early yet," said Pee-Wee. "Anyway we're all ready, hey? Now we'll scout out scoutish—now we'll I mean we'll scoutish-ingly scout thoughts—I mean scoutchy thoughts, I mean we'll get 'em, hey?"

"That's what," said the cheerful Ben.

CHAPTER XI

ALL DRESSED UP, AND WAITING

FIVE o'clock came but there were no arrivals. Some people in an auto paused to inspect the display and journeyed on. One or two men from the village store strolled over and looked at the reconditioned war memorial. Since the names were now visible for the first time in several years they fell to chatting about one or two of the boys. One of them said that Colly Todd "was allus a wild youngster but smarrt—smarrt as a steel trap."

"He'll be gitten 'long wherever he is," said another. "Danny, he wuz a good boy too, and no ways stuck up. Pleasant like and sociable. Not a bit like the old man. A nice boy, Danny wuz. Got shell shocked and off he walks plunk inter the German lines and got popped off by a sharp shooter. He never knowed what he was doin'."

"So I heard Jim Collet tell," answered the

other. "That was bad business, that shell shock. Off goes your senses, *plunk,* like that."

They strolled away again, over to the post office and tilted themselves back in two chairs on the porch. It seemed as if Pee-Wee had called the dead to life.

Six o'clock came but no candidates for scouting. Pee-Wee and Ben sat on a couple of boxes before the tent, eating cookies and waiting.

"Waitin' at the church, huh?" said Ben. "Probably they'll all come in a bunch."

"We'll enlist their names first of all, hey?" said Pee-Wee.

"Oh yes, they'll have to come up to Bridgeboro to take the oath. We ought to dig up a scoutmaster down here, but those rubes over there at the post office don't look very good to me. Well, the first thing to do is to get them in line."

"I'm the one that found *you,*" said Pee-Wee, starting on a banana.

"Not much of a find, kid."

"Gee, I like you better than all of them put together," said Pee-Wee. "Better than anything, I don't care what."

"Better than bananas?"

"Sure, and apples too. I'd rather be alone with you than with those crazy, nonsensical Silver Foxes—Roy Blakeley and all those fellows."

Ben patted his shoulder. "Same here, kid."

"Gee whiz, I don't mind crazy stuff but you sure got to be serious when you're a scout, haven't you?"

"Well, a laugh is a good thing, kid; and you've started more laughs than all the scouts this side of Mars."

"I'm going to write to you when I go to South Africa," said Pee-Wee. "You're my special friend."

Ben glanced sideways at the sturdy little round faced, curly haired scout beside him. And he was minded how in triumph or disaster Pee-Wee was always the same. Nothing could dampen his enthusiasm and scout ardor. He had not the slightest idea how funny he was, he was so tremendously preoccupied with mighty plans. He was terrible as an antagonist, yet he never cherished any malice; he was too busy. What if he had more junk depending from his martial belt than another scout? Had he not also more spirit

than another scout? What other boy, what other scout even, would have gone to all this trouble in the interest of scouting generally?

"I like you because they don't laugh at you," said the sturdy little fellow. "*Geeee whiz,* they don't laugh at *you,* that's sure. They can see *you're* a scout all right. I'm the one that found you too."

Ben laughed, Pee-Wee's generous utterances were so invariably topped off with a boast.

"I bet they'll be surprised when they see how we've got everything fixed up, hey? Now they know I can do things, don't they? How I went and got that permit? That was the way to shut them up, hey?"

Six o'clock came, and half-past six. But no boys. The warm summer afternoon was beginning to mellow into twilight; the wash boiler up in the tree shone silvery where the descending sun caught it. A faint odor of cooking was wafted on the evening breeze from the general store across the road. Three respectable chickens roosted on the platform railing of the post office. A holy calm seemed settling on Hickson's Cross-roads. A boy in a big straw hat came along

driving some cows back to pasture. He helped himself to a marshmallow but did not pause. The novelty of Pee-Wee's expedition had passed.

"Maybe if he sees them he'll remind them, hey?" said Pee-Wee.

"That reminds *me*," said cheery Ben. "Probably they've all got chores to do around this time. They'll be along."

"Maybe they have to feed pigs and horses and everything—I bet."

"Likely as not."

"You're going to be the head of one of the patrols," Pee-Wee said.

Half-past seven. Eight o'clock. But no boys. How quiet Hickson's Crossroads seemed in the gathering dusk! In a little white house up the road our visitors saw a light—cheerful reminder of evening and homecoming and supper. But it was only the golden reflection of the sunlight in the distant window. It passed, and a window in another house was resplendent for a few minutes in this shimmering bath of dying light. How drab the old country road looked in the darkening shadow! High above in the gray sky sped a great bird, hastening to its craggy nest. The

postmaster came out, locked the post office door and went away up the road. The screech of an owl could be heard in the solemn woods beyond the village. Far, far off, and mellowed by the distance, could be heard the whistle of a locomotive. And even these two good scouts and good companions felt a little of that wistful something which is less than homesickness, and which insinuates itself into the very soul of the wayfarer at the close of day.

"I wish they'd hurry up," said Pee-Wee. "Gee, I'm getting hungry. Maybe they got a big surprise for us, hey?"

"Maybe," said Ben.

"Geee whiz, I'm glad you're here with me, anyway. It's kind of funny, isn't it, the time just a little bit before you start building campfire?" No one would say of Pee-Wee that he was sentimental, but he felt (and expressed in his own clumsy way) the pensive sentiment of twilight time. "Gee, anyway I'm glad you're here. I'm going to tell everybody you were partners with me when we got a lot of new scouts."

"We scout for scouts together, kid."

"The more I try to say that stuff on the poster,

the more I can't do it," said Pee-Wee. "I bet here comes some of them now."

But the voices he had heard developed into those of two women in sunbonnets; they came around the corner of Hickson's store and went into a house near by.

"False alarm," said Ben.

Eight o'clock—almost nine. But no boys to put their names in Pee-Wee's book and partake of his scoutish hospitality. The scene was now of a common hue; there was no playing and changing light. The crimson glints had faded. Hickson's Crossroads was withdrawing into the darkness. The only bright spot anywhere about was the white tent. Slowly and without a word Ben got up and drew down the nation's emblem from the flagpole, folded it and laid it away in the tent. Then he resumed his seat on the box near Pee-Wee. So they both sat and waited and neither spoke.

Came then out of the darkness little Claudius Tibbels, quite alone. "They won't come," he said. "I tried to get them to, but they all went to the circus. That big fellow says they got to hand it to you for getting the permit. I didn't

go because I wanted to come and tell you. You ain't mad at *me,* are you?"

There was a few moments' pause. It was Ben who spoke. "Why should we be mad at you?" he asked. "Thanks for coming."

The poor little fellow seemed reassured. "Anyway, *I'm* going to join," he said. "I like it better than the circus."

But Pee-Wee did not rise to welcome him; he just sat speechless. "Ain't they going to come *at all?*" he finally asked.

"No, they won't," said Claudius, "because they're all so crazy about going to the circus. One of them said he might come if it wasn't for the elephants. Kinky—that's the big fellow—he said we never have any circuses here on account of old grouchy Dobbins, and he wasn't going to miss it. I said I'd give him my jackknife if he'd come, but he wouldn't. He said a circus is better than anything. I got seventy-two cents in my bank and I said I'd give him that too. But just the same he wouldn't come. I told him you invented a lot of things you were going to show, but he said you invented a way to have the circus and that was good enough for him."

Ben only sat whistling to himself while the fearful and embarrassed little Claudius stood by. "Yep, he invented it, all right," said Ben finally.

But Pee-Wee, for one of the very few occasions in his life, sat silent, dumfounded. They had laughed at his boasts about his familiarity with wild life and he had answered their flippant ridicule with another boast—a boast of civic influence. And he had made good that boast with an official permit from the mayor. He had brought into this benighted village a rival with whom he could not hope to cope. And there you have Pee-Wee Harris all over, muddling everything up with his scout ability and his good turns. He said not a word for he could not comprehend it. He had furnished the weapon to strike down his own cause. His triumph was a disaster.

And then he let loose the fountains of his wrath. "That shows how much they don't know about keeping their words like scouts have to do like it says in the law and when I came down here scoutching—scouting—scouting my thoughts that I can scout out scouts—and I go and get a permit on account of how I have a lot of resources and civilized authority and all things like that

—then they go to the circus! *Geeeeee whiz!* Even I got things better than the circus here, even better than elephants; eats and everything. All right for them—the next time I do anything for *them,* that's all I say!"

"They said it wouldn't be a go anyway because they haven't got any club house here," Claudius timidly ventured.

"All right for *them!*" Pee-Wee roared ominously. "All right for *them* for not keeping their words!"

"But they said they got to hand it to you for getting the permit," said Claudius.

"Even I can do bigger things than that!" Pee-Wee boastfully thundered. *"All right for them!* They'll see."

He had not the slightest idea what he meant. He could hardly hope to spring anything more sensational than the subjugation of old man Dobbins. He could hardly hope to put up anything now to rival Mr. Costello's aggregation of marvels. He was assuredly defeated. He was in competition with elephants; with raging and roaring rivals of his own importation.

"Come on, let's eat," said Ben, dully.

CHAPTER XII

BEN TAKES A HAND

CLAUDIUS TIBBELS stayed to supper with them, but the gala spirit was absent from the meal. As the poor little fellow went away he seemed to feel that he bore the whole responsibility for the fiasco on his narrow little shoulders. Ben watched him trudging away into the darkness, loyal, devoted little fellow that he was.

"Maybe he'll get them to come tomorrow, hey?" said Pee-Wee, his spirits rising.

"I don't think so, kid. Tomorrow's Sunday and I think the best thing we can do is to pack up and beat it. This gang isn't interested."

He spoke frankly now, what he had felt all along, that Pee-Wee's flamboyant recruiting methods were not the best way to get boys interested. He had subscribed to Pee-Wee's sensational tactics because he had a sense of humor and always followed Pee-Wee. Following Pee-

Wee one was pretty sure to get a good laugh if nothing else. But Ben did not laugh now at this tragic sequel of his little comrade's plans. He had many times laughed at the discrepancy between Pee-Wee and his plans; he was so small and his plans were so tremendous. Everything about Pee-Wee was enormous—except his size.

"You see, kid, they are right about there not being any club house here. Where would they meet? This is one hick burg. And they haven't got anybody for a scoutmaster. I think what that poster means is for a scout to get after a fellow—not to bite off more than he can chew."

"I can bite off more than I can chew," Pee-Wee shouted.

"That's just it," laughed Ben; "You did too much. You swamped us with the circus. I've got a hunch, kid, that the best way is to start at home in our own town and get new fellows interested. The big drive stuff doesn't go."

"Didn't I show 'em what I could do?" Pee-Wee thundered. "And I'm going to stay here tomorrow, and Monday too, and after the circus goes away I bet they'll come around. If I can get a permit from a mayor (he fairly

shouted the word) do you think I can't scoutch, scout scout out——"

"All right, kid, only how about our food? It will get all stale and my brother wants to use the car and my dad and your dad think we're coming back——"

"I don't care about dads!" Pee-Wee fairly screamed. Even I'm going to South Africa. Do you think I can't stay away three days?—Geee whiz! When I'm in South Africa with Martin Johnson maybe I won't be heard of for a lot of months in the impenetrated wildness. So now if you're going to be a quitter, gee whiz, you can go and be one. I came down here to go come and get 'em like it says if they try to stay out I won't let 'em—that's what it says—and I got to chase 'em and grab 'em and fret 'em—that's what it says."

"All right, kid. Only I think the way to do is not to give a show with all this junk——"

"Do you call my invention of a shower junk?"

"All right, kid, let's not scrap about it. We'll camp here tonight, and tomorrow I'm going back to Bridgeboro because my folks expect me."

"That shows how much you care about scouting that you can be scared by a circus, when it says you got to scout out——"

"Yes, but how about the scout law? Haven't I got to do what I promised my dad I would do?"

"It says you got to not give up," said Pee-Wee. "Didn't I handle old man Dobbins?"

"You sure did. I wish you hadn't and then we might have had the bunch here. But anyway I don't think those fellows would have got in line. They were out to kid us along, that's all. The little chap, Claudius, he's all right, and maybe he'll get them interested. But the first thing to do is to get a *man* interested and get a meeting place. Now you and I never scrapped, and jumping jiminies, we're not going to scrap now. Come on, let's cook some eats and turn in. This is the worst hick town I ever struck. Why, it's down where the mills are that the circus is; up here there isn't anything and they're too blamed sleepy to keep the moss off their war memorial so anyone can read it. Can you beat that. No wonder those soldiers all went away again. That's the only good thing I know about this place, it's a

peach of a place to go away from. Believe me, it'll take more than a toy rainstorm to wake them up."

"I bet I can wake them up!" yelled Pee-Wee. "I bet I can. And if you want to go home tomorrow you can do it, and that shows you're a quitter and you let a little bit of a village lick you!"

"What could we do here on Sunday anyway? We couldn't run our show. Come on now, how about some fried bacon? We won't bother about the stew, it's too late. Let's chuck some of this indian meal in the frying pan and see what happens. Here's some cocoa; I wonder how that would go with indian meal—what do you say, shall we pour it in? Yellow and brown, that's your old patrol color. Here, give us your saucepan—on with the dance. Start the fire up and let's eat. I feel kind of reckless tonight; what do you say we flavor it up with this "arnica for sprains and bruises!" Shall we try that. Away dull care, let's eat."

He wrenched Pee-Wee's precious aluminum frying pan from the hero's belt and made a random selection among their stores. Meanwhile

Pee-Wee, grouchy and sullen, started a fire.

"Here's a good one," said Ben. We'll have an omelet and we'll paint it with iodine."

"Don't you pour out that iodine!" Pee-Wee screamed. "We couldn't buy any more and it's poison and suppose we got a cut or something. You stop your fooling. You got to have a permit to get iodine."

Ben laid the bottle down promptly. "Good night," said he, "we don't want any more permits —nix on the permit stuff. I'm even thinking of throwing away my permit to drive the car, I'm so sore on permits. That's the cause of our downfall, kid—permits."

CHAPTER XIII

THE ADVENTURE OF LIZZIE

THE next morning Ben was gay, even hilarious. But Pee-Wee sensed a certain portentous resolution in his comrade's humorous good cheer. There was something decisive about it. For one thing, in most jovial mood he washed off the garish slogans from his car.

"Are you going to print something else on?" Pee-Wee asked.

"If I print anything else on there it will be Home Sweet Home," said Ben. "How about the storming wash boiler; shall we leave it for the birds to nest in?"

Pee-Wee watched Ben's cheery preparations for departure with a scowl darker than any tin stormcloud he had ever let loose. "That shows! *That shows!*" he roared in contemptuous denunciation "that you make fun of scouting—that shows. Even Willis Carlin—you can go and ask him—even he was under that shower one day

when we were starting a fire and I let the water come down while I was lighting the fire—*you don't even listen*—and, and he even got his feet wet and he got a cold from it and he had to stay home from school four days. That shows how much of a real shower it is—you're worse than Roy Blakeley. Even I had to give him a permit to stay home from scout meeting——"

By this time Ben was lying on the grass, kicking his legs and laughing uncontrollably. "Don't, kid!" he managed to say. "I ask you *please* don't talk about permits."

"Even he came near getting the grippe," Pee-Wee roared.

"It's a wonder he didn't get struck by the lightning," Ben said amid his bursts of mirth.

In a few moments he was up again, piling things into the old flivver, Pee-Wee watching him with lowering looks.

"We'll keep out this can of spaghetti, hey?" said Ben briskly. "We'll cook dinner here before we start. Let's mash the marshmallows up and dump these raisins in and cook it. We'll call it snow pudding, it ought to be good. How about this can of milk; what were you going to do with

that? Into the flivver. What's this in the shoe box—roots?"

"Those are herbs I dug up to make tea, you let them alone," Pee-Wee shouted.

There was a whole bucketful of marshmallows with the JOIN THE SCOUTS stamped on them, which Ben put into the car. Pee-Wee's commissary equipment was always more plentiful and varied than necesary. When he read suggestions for camping, he adopted *all* the suggestions. He included everything that was advertised in *Boys' Life* and in the advertising pages of the Handbook. The starving children of Russia could have been banqueted on Pee-Wee's usual camping stores. These, with the exception of a few things for dinner, Ben now put into the car, working cheerily and briskly; he seemed the very soul of good nature. But it was evident that so far as he was concerned, the big intensive drive was over. He intended after dinner to effect an honorable retreat from Hickson's Crossroads.

But he was delightfully buoyant in his brisk preparations for departure, and not in the least displeased at the great missionary's frowning

countenance and lack of co-operation. One article after another of Pee-Wee's outlandish luggage was thrown into the car as Ben sang *The Old Lake Trail* with amusing variations. He did not venture to bring Pee-Wee's wash boiler down from the tree, but the hose was his and he coiled it up and threw it in the car.

"Now I guess about all we have to do is to eat," he finally said, glancing about. "We'll leave the tent up till after dinner. I'm holding out one can of spaghetti, a loaf of bread, some cookies——"

"You leave out some evaporated milk, too," the fallen hero angrily demanded.

Ben gaily complied. "One can of exasperated milk," said he, throwing it on the grass. "I remind myself of a man in a chain store. And that will be enough till we get home. What do you say, Sir Scoutcher?"

Pee-Wee disdained to answer.

"Do you know what I'm going to do, kid, to kill the time? Look at that car—the chalk all over it. I'm going to drive it down to the brook and wash it *right*. Are you with me? It's nice and shady down there. Remember we have to be

chivalrous in our treatment of girls. Have a thought for Lizzie."

But the disgruntled hero was in no mood for airy pleasantries. The seductive poster still haunted him, South Africa called, and he would not admit defeat at the rustic hands of Hickson's Crossroads. Yet he might have sensed the "flop" of his mighty enterprise, for throughout that beautiful Sunday morning not so much as a single boy appeared upon the scene.

As for Ben, nothing could dim his fine spirit. He had always accompanied Pee-Wee on his preposterous enterprises more for amusement than anything else. But he would not let one of these enterprises run too far. It was because Doctor Harris knew Ben and trusted him that he had agreed to Pee-Wee's martial expedition against Hicksville Crossroads. Ben was not going to prolong their stay to encounter complications at home.

Without the slightest sign of annoyance he drove off in his rattly old Ford toward a point where a rushing brook converged with the road and ran alongside it. If ever a sorry and neglected damsel deserved chivalrous treatment at

the hands of a true knight, Lizzie was that damsel. But Ben was cruel, even brutal. He drove along at his customary breakneck pace while the old car jumped and danced and shook, and its loosely piled contents fell from the rear seat and banged around on the floor. A can of salmon rolled back and forth with enough giddy and erratic motion to make the salmon seasick if it had not already been killed and reduced to juicy slices.

He was looking for a place to drive off the road and down to the brook which was five or six feet below. He passed two or three good places, but thought he might find one still better. Of course he could have washed his car on the green where the pump was handy but he had thought a more secluded spot would be in better keeping with the peacefullness of the village green on a Sunday morning. At last he came to a spot where he thought he could safely descend, following, of course, a diagonal direction. But scarcely had he steered off the road when the car gave a lunge, and the front and rear wheels on one side settled into yielding mud.

Ben was able to extricate the car from this entanglement, only to again plunge forward to a

point where one front wheel caught on a projecting root which toppled the car over as nicely as if it had been tripped up by some mischievous boy. And there lay Lizzie on her side while every last article of her contents went slipping and rolling down into the crystal brook. The can of salmon which had, en route, abandoned itself to such a dizzy career, rolled gaily down against a tree and then into the water, thus terminating its brief and wild debauch. An ivory soap box containing a strip of bacon and some potatoes (for stick roasting) floated majestically away upon the hurrying current. Four or five potatoes which had escaped in the descent went rolling down to find their own way into the depths. The precious bag of indian meal out of which Pee-Wee could produce many weird concoctions, paused against a tree, then went pell-mell down, leaving a powdery trail after it. Loose tea biscuits floated on the water like polka dots while fishes nibbled at them, astonished no doubt at this sudden sumptuous feast. The last Ben saw of a chocolate cake (contributed by Pee-Wee's loving sister) it was sailing downstream with a bullfrog squatting triumphantly upon it.

"Well, that's that," said Ben. "The only thing that's left is Lizzie." But even Lizzie's front cushion had gone upon a voyage of exploration, never to return. "That's the time I delivered the goods" he chuckled.

They were gone, the whole commissary of the big drive, and Ben fell to inspecting the unhappy Ford. It looked almost peaceful as it lay there. It did not squeak or rattle; it seemed at rest. Who should shed a tear for its mishap as it lay there against a tree on that calm Sabbath morn, resting from its labors? But for that tree it would have followed the ivory soap box and the chocolate cake upon their coasting adventure. It would have found a grave with the can of salmon.

But Ben had no misgivings about his Ford. Lizzie had lain down like this before. Like a horse, all that was necessary to do was to get her on her feet and she would go. She never failed. If every damsel could only be trusted as Ben trusted Lizzie! Her already threadbare top was quite demolished. A rear door was strained and would not shut. But since the other one had long since refused to latch, they were now even. Ben had no fears at all about Lizzie.

Nor did he suffer the mishap to dim his gay spirit. Indeed he enjoyed it as being in keeping with the whole outlandish expedition. He was, after all, the true scout and could get fun out of anything. And really the occurrence was in no way a catastrophe since the lost goods were only to be taken home. What is a chocolate cake, more or less? Or an ivory soap box filled with bacon and potatoes. "We still have a can of spaghetti and a couple of things for a light lunch," said he.

He went up to the roadside to see if perchance a car might be approaching so that he could enlist help. Presently one went rushing by, its driver paying not the slightest heed to his call. This was a by-way, one of those old country roads which are all too scarce nowadays, winding its way through woodland, and there was almost no traffic. Still Ben sat on a rock and waited. He was always entertained by his mishaps with that disreputable car just as he was by Pee-Wee and his ambitious schemes. He was the last boy in the world to be thrown into an ill-humor.

At last his patience was rewarded by the sight of a big red wagon, drawn by horses, coming

along the road. Three husky looking men swayed back and forth upon its high springless seat as it moved lumberingly along, its great red bulk brushing the growth on either side in its slow, joggling progress. It turned out to be a big moving van from Northtown which, fortunately, had got on the wrong road.

"Whoooo-up" said one of the men, and the big caravan came to a halt. "Yer get upset?" he called down to Ben.

"No, it's just taking a nap" said Ben.

"Yere?" called down one of the men good-naturedly. "Well, it'll be a good long nap, I'm thinkin'. Yer want a lift?"

"Who shoved yer out, a road hog?" another called down.

"Nope," said Ben "I did the whole thing, Pretty good job, huh?"

"I'll say, said the driver, looking out around the edge of his high seat at the Ford. "Want us ter pull yer out?"

"If you don't mind," said Ben. "If you think you can."

"We can stand her up and haul her out, all right, only she won't go."

"I bet she will," said Ben.

By this time one of the men was out and inspecting Lizzie. "Sure she will," he said. "I think your front left axle is a little out but she'll walk—she'll walk, all right. Them things is made to walk. Chuck us down de towin' rope, Mike. Come on down here till we chuck this pile o'junk up on the road."

"The top's all bent," said another of the men.

"Yer don't get yer explosions in the top," the driver countered.

"She's outer line, I bet."

"So's your old man," said the biggest of the three. "I seed a flivver wunst what fell down a freight elevator shaft in Coleman's Warehouse and she didn't never even stall. Walked right out n'inter the traffic. All she lost wuz a hub cap and that would a' travelled if the rest of her had been bust up. But yer don't never wanter leave one of them flivvers get inter yer fountain pen, it'll clog it up. Here you go, Charlie, pass that rope over here. Then unhook the horses."

"What's the idea unhookin' 'em?"

"So we can get a crossways pull, yer simp. Wait a minute now, let's try and stand her up.

What the dickens is this potato doin' here?"

"Give it to me, I'll keep it for a souvenir," said Ben.

"Look out she don't go the other way," said the man called Mike as all four applied themselves to the wretched Lizzie. "Here we go—leave the rope down till we get 'er up. All right, what d'yer say! Up she goes—one—easy. Now on that end. Look out for the mud—here's a couple of animal crackers, that's what's makin' 'er heavy. A elephant and a camel; now she'll go—eeeeasy. Now wunst again, up she —wait a minute . . ."

CHAPTER XIV

FAMILIAR FACES

BEN always remembered this episode and the scoutish good turn done him by that burly trio. Whenever he saw one of Smashett and Buster's big red moving vans he thought of the plight of Lizzie at the brook; Lizzie who remained faithful even after the food had deserted. To be sure, he rescued one potato and two animal crackers, but otherwise the encounter was decidedly in favor of the brook.

For Lizzie took him back to the green. To be sure, she developed a tendency to verge to the left and her orchestral quality was enhanced by a dozen or so new squeaks and rattles. But Ben, who was used to Pee-Wee, was not disturbed by noises. He drove gaily back after his adventure and was soon conscious of a noise which effectually drowned the brass band clamor of his old Ford. This was the voice of Pee-Wee himself

(with other voices in the background) hailing him as he approached along the road.

He had left the great recruiting specialist in as grumpy a mood as had ever clouded the brow of that vociferous little scout. He had departed under the shadow of Pee-Wee's scorn. And lo, here was Pee-Wee some few yards along the road from the green, waiting for him in a state of uncontrollable excitement. Such were the sudden changes in this little genius of scouting!

"I'm glad—I'm glad you got back," Pee-Wee fairly yelled. "I thought maybe you got sore and went home. Oh, gee whiz, I'm glad you got back. Roy Blakeley and all the Silver Foxes are here, they started at six o'clock and they hiked here to see us, and they're good and hungry and they came to dinner. So now we're going to have a regular scout dinner, bacon and roasted potatoes and everything, and gee whiz, I like my own troop best of all, I should worry about these rubes. And now you see it's good I brought all those things, cakes, and everything, and indian meal, and you were laughing at me—but *now* you see! Gee whiz, we've been waiting and I want that soap box full of stuff *quick*. Now we're going to

show this town how we have a regular rally and they can all come and look at us eating, I should worry. There are nine of them because Artie Van Arlen* came too, on account of one of my scout dinners, that's what he said. He paused for breath, and jumped on the broken old running board.

"Going to get in?" asked Ben, a certain chill pervading him.

"No, it's only a few yards, hurry up," said Pee-Wee, excitedly.

The village green assuredly presented a gala spectacle as the unhappy Ben drove his car around behind the tent where for the moment Pee-Wee was too excited to inspect it. There, in full glory, was Roy Blakeley with his hilarious patrol, and Artie Van Arlen, brought along, as Roy said, to do a good turn to his mother. Never was Roy's mischievously smiling face more radiant! Never had those dancing eyes glowed with such irresponsible jeering raillery! Pee-Wee, always on his guard, watched his every glance, ready to shout down Roy's first joyous derisive outburst. Yet Pee-Wee was of all things a scout and he was

*Artie Van Arlen was patrol leader of the Ravens.

overjoyed at this climax of affairs which would enable him to demonstrate the hospitalities of scouting.

"Did you come on foot all the way?" Pee-Wee asked.

"No, we came on our heads," said Roy. "Ask me another. We've been hunting all around for Crossen's Hickroads, or whatever you call it, and all of a sudden we saw it just behind a tree. Oh boy, but this is a dandy day for the race."

"What race?" asked Pee-Wee

"The human race," said Roy, "no sooner said than stung. Hey, Pee-Wee what do you think? Westy won his conversation badge coming down here——"

"You mean *conservation,*" shouted Pee-Wee.

"What do I care what I mean? He thinks a game bird is a bird that plays games, ask Artie. Hey, Artie, didn't we ford a stream fifty feet wide? A man gave us a ride across in a Ford. Listen, Scout Harris. We were at the movies last night and we met that new fellow that moved into the house up your way, he's more to be pitied than blamed. And he wants to join your patrol and he wanted to know how and we told him he

has to go one mile scout-pace after a patrol wagon—honest. He wanted to know when you'd be back and I told him we hoped never. What's that, a store over there?"

"Did you bring any things?" asked the miserable Ben.

"Did we bring any things! Ask me an answer and I'll give you the question to it. Believe me, we brought nine appetites. This hike is a walking famine."

"Don't you care," shouted Pee-Wee. "I'm going to cook dinner."

"Sure" spoke up Badleigh Manners (Bad Manners they called him).

"Your sister told us you had stuff enough to feed the army, not counting the navy——"

"And the coast guard, too," said Roy. "I'd even be willing to eat a package of tacks, I'm so hungry. Hey kid, your sister said there's a big round chocolate cake kind of square shaped down here. Would you please introduce us."

"How do you like being with Pee-Wee all night?" Dorry Benton asked of Ben. "We thought maybe we'd have to hike all the way to

South Africa—you know Pee-Wee's on his way there."

"Yes, yes," said Roy. "He's some trot glober, all right. Hey, kid, don't forget to get a snapshot of the equator. How about eats anyway? How many of us can go home in the flivver?"

"It's bad to eat too much when you're tired," said the wretched Ben.

"Did we say we were tired eating?" snapped Warde Hollister.

"Listen!" shouted Pee-Wee. "Will you all shut up at once and listen!"

"Let's have a large chunk of silence," said Roy. "Obey your patrol leader. P. Harris is going to take the floor—and anything else that isn't nailed down. I hear there are some kippered marshmallows loafing around here——"

"Will you shut up!" Pee-Wee yelled. "Shh, here comes a little fellow that's going to join the scouts and his name is Tibbels——"

"We're thinking more about nibbles," said Roy. Look at the size of him—hey, Warde, look at the size of what's coming."

"He belongs on a watch chain," said Warde.

"You be careful what you say to him," said Pee-Wee in a threatening whisper. "And don't you start telling him a lot of your crazy nonsense about scouting that's not true."

"You impeach our veracity?" demanded Brick Warner.

"Those are harsh words, Sir Harris," said Roy. "We will tell him the truth, the whole truth, and nothing like the truth, won't we, Westy?"

By this time little Claudius Tibbels, ever faithful, was almost among them. He had paused timidly in the road at seeing this array of scouts, but he now approached arranging a flaunting bow tie with which his mother usually celebrated Sunday.

"You look out what you say to him," whispered Pee-Wee.

"Watch your step, he's our only recruit," said Ben. "How 'bout you, Claudy, glad to see you. Don't be scared of this bunch, they're goofy but harmless."

With commendable self possession little Claudius went straight up to his hero with a concentration of purpose that seemed to have been duly deliberated. "My mother said I could come to

dinner with you," he said. "And she said I could have two helpings of dessert but not any more." He had evidently been instructed to say this, and he was punctilious and sober about it.

"Nothing less than four helpings," said Roy. "When you're among the scouts you have to do as the scouts do. We can get around it, we can give you two helpings in four sections. Take a seat—take a couple of seats."

Emboldened by this cordiality, little Claudius nervously adjusted his week-end tie and soberly announced, "I got two more boys for you and they're coming to dinner too. Only one of them had to feed the pigs."

"That's just what Pee-Wee's going to do," said Roy. "The more the merrier."

"Oh gee whiz, that's dandy!" said Pee-Wee. "Are they positively, surely, absolutely coming?"

"One of them had to wait to feed the pigs," little Claudius repeated soberly. He seemed a trifle fearful of getting off the track of his set purpose among these strangers. But he did venture a casual remark. "His name is George Eator," said he.

"That's a good name" said Westy Martin.

"He ought to be able to surround a hunters' stew."

"And the other one's name is Hilman Cutter," Claudius said without a smile.

"We'll let him carve the soup," said Roy.

An indescribable chill seized poor Ben. He glanced up the road in the forlorn hope that something—*something*—would occur to confound the purpose of these expected guests. For a few delusive minutes he indulged this dream. Perhaps, *perhaps,* the pigs had consumed George Eator. Perhaps his father had dropped dead, or the house caught fire.

But no, for even as he scanned the road there appeared around the bend, not two boys but *three* (things were going Pee-Wee's way at last), and little Claudius, who seemed as much elated as Pee-Wee himself, confided to his hero:

"That other one is Carl Gluttenheimer, He wasn't going to come because he says they have big dinners at his house—his father is awful fat. But I guess they got him to come."

There was something appallingly stolid about Carl Gluttenheimer. He had a certain invincible manner of approach which I dare say some ances-

tor of his had learned in the German army. He looked as if he could walk straight through a house. His demeanor seemed to say that eating was no small matter with him, no social diversion, but a kind of solemn duty. Flanked by his two smaller companions, he came on like a conquerer.

"Do—do you think there will be any more?" asked poor Ben.

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here" carolled Roy.

CHAPTER XV

EATS

For a few minutes it was possible for Ben to hold off this ravenous group by an amusing recital of Pee-Wee's Waterloo at Hickson's Crossroads.

"Anyway it was a dandy failure," Pee-Wee shouted. "Because anyway if I stayed here it would be a success because now they're starting to get interested—that shows."

"It's a successful failure," said Westy Martin.

"It's one of the finest things that ever didn't happen," said Bad Manners.

"I guess it was the biggest crowd that Pee-Wee ever didn't get," said Artie Van Arlen.

"Now you're talking like a crazy Silver Fox," shouted Pee-Wee.

"Pee-Wee has the largest list of non-members of any patrol leader in the United Cigar Stores," chimed in Warde Hollister. They had all absorbed the hilarious spirit of their leader.

"Hey, kid" said Roy soberly, "did you tell

Nibbles how the second hand badge is the same as the first hand badge only it's not new? The second hand badge is for climbing with your hands and the second foot badge is for hiking on your feet. I'm a patrol leader and I know everything on the outside of the Handbook. Did you tell him about a Star scout being one that knows astronomy. Did you tell him where the big dipper is?"

"No, he showed him where the big saucepan is, around his belt," said Dorry.

"If you want to be a scout," said Roy, glancing at poor little Claudius, who was all attention, "you have to start at the bottom and go backwards, I'll leave it to Ben."

Little Claudius listened respectfully and adjusted his Sunday tie.

"Don't you pay any attention to anything he says," Pee-Wee warned the little fellow. "Even he told a new feller up at Temple Camp that there was a horse up in the field and to go and take a picture of him and it was only a saw-horse and the management gave him a good reprimand."

"I've got it yet," Roy sang out. "A sloutish

sprout shouts out that he can't countishly count out loutish sprouts of scroutching—I'll leave it to Pee-Wee if it isn't true. If you want to join the scouts, here is the time and now is the place. To-day is the tomorrow you were planning to join yesterday."

"Absolutely," said Dorry Benton.

"Wrong the first time as usual," said Roy.

"Now you see, now you see!" Pee-Wee shouted. "Now you see how crazy they are that even their own scoutmaster says so, I can prove it. Don't you pay any attention to what they say because they're not serious about scouting."

"No? Well, we're serious about eating," said Will Dawson.

"That's one thing P. Harris is strong on," said Westy. "He's the only scout that can eat two helpings at one time. I'll say that for him, Nibbles."

"His name is *Tibbels!*" Pee-Wee thundered.

"Ve cum to see what scouts can do yet mitt cooking," said the stolid Carl Gluttenheimer. "Diss dey shout about much."

"You'll see, you'll see," Pee-Wee shouted. "Now you're going to have a regular feed like we

have at camp, and when you see, I bet you'll join. I bet all the rest of them will come and join too. Even this dinner is going to be better than the circus, even; hunters' stew and bacon and roasted potatoes and indian meal pudding with chocolate in it——"

"It's going to be a three ring dinner," said Roy, "Only where is it?"

"I'm going to start the fire right now," said Pee-Wee, "and you'll see just the way scouts do at camp."

"There are just thirteen of us," said Westy. "Eight Silver Foxes, one Elk, Pee-Wee and Ben, and the new recruits."

"We should worry about superstitions," said Pee-Wee. "Come on, help me get some things out of the car. Gee whiz, we were going to take all the stuff home. A couple of fellers better start the fire. *Now* you'll see! *Now* you'll see!" he added with a boastful look at the expectant strangers.

Pee-Wee indeed felt that fortune was at last smiling upon him. Here was Roy and his merry company, all scouts par excellence, albeit they needed watching. Their hilarious jests required to

be discounted and denounced but Pee-Wee knew how to do this. Much of his young life was spent in warning aspiring tenderfeet against Roy's jesting and nonsense. He was particular to interpret Roy's scouting formulas and recipes to the wide-eyed Claudius. He also was at much pains to safeguard Cutter and Eaton from being seduced into false notions about the Handbook. But Carl Gluttenheimer was in no peril. He had come for one purpose and one only. He would know how to test the value of scouting. If this campfire gluttony was all that he had been led to believe, he would certainly join. He was wholly frank and unabashed about this. He was the grand, shining example of that army of little boys who go to Sunday school picnics because of the ice cream and cake, and other good things they have to offer.

As for poor Ben Maxwell, there are not words to convey his feelings as this merry, famishing throng clustered about, beseeching Pee-Wee to save their lives. The grand scheme of his diminutive friend had collapsed and he had taken the upper hand and prepared for their departure. And now he saw his hero's chance renewed; glory

knocked upon the door. It was so characteristic of Pee-Wee's tumultous career!

Poor Ben, he had not the courage to tell the awful truth until the very last minute. Weak wretch! He watched Warde and Artie kindle the cheery blaze above which was to rise in mid-air that incense of scouting, the savory aroma of hunters' stew. With wistful eyes, he watched little Claudius and two of his recruits, gathering sticks. He took note of Roy (that arch demon of the troop) pretending to allay his hunger by sucking the leather case of a belt-axe. He trembled at the sight of the stolid Carl Gluttenheimer standing there like a great pig, waiting patiently.

It was not until the merry blaze was crackling and mounting and three or four scouts had started to lay the boards on two saw-horses that Ben, literally driven to bay, uttered the blighting words.

"Listen," said he. "Before you go any further, *listen!* You know thirteen means bad luck——"

"It means bad luck to the eats when we tackle them," said Artie.

"I don't mean that," said the miserable Ben. "You know—you see—what I mean is—you

might say we're out of luck. All we've got—now don't get excited—all we've got is one can of spaghetti, one can of evaporated milk, one loaf of bread, and a package of cookies. In the car I think, there's a potato and two animal crackers."

"In the car?" shouted Pee-Wee.

"Sure, we're lucky to have the car even," said Ben. "She toppled over down the bank along the road aways and all the stuff went rolling kerflop into the brook. I didn't kind o'—just exactly like to tell you. Three men from a big moving van helped me get her right side up again."

"What are you talking about?" Pee-Wee fairly screamed. "Come on, let's get the box."

"The box is floating toward the sea, kid," said Ben. "I lost one of the seat cushions of the car, too."

"What do you mean?" Pee-Wee demanded, aghast.

"I mean there isn't going to be any scout banquet," said Ben dejectedly. "Everything that didn't sink went floating off——"

During the few seconds of awful silence which followed, Pee-Wee presented a picture that no

artist could paint. He stood there glowering in speechless and withering scorn. *"Do you mean it?"* he demanded deafeningly.

"Absolutely, kid. Go and look in the car. On the floor you'll see a potato—and a camel and an elephant. That's all there is, there isn't any more." A sort of hopelessness had crept into Ben's voice.

"We'll cook the elephant!" shouted Roy.

"We'll stew him in exaggerated milk. We'll have one string of spaghetti each. And that's the welcome we get! After getting up at six o'clock in the morning and starting out at five and hiking twenty or thirty miles or less, all we get is an elephant and a camel!"

"There's a potato," said poor Ben.

"Please excuse me while I drop dead," said Roy, With a gesture of despair he feigned complete exhaustion and sank to the ground. "So this is a scout barbecue! This is the kind of welcome we get from P. Harris to his brother scouts. They told us in Bridgeboro just before we left this morning not to eat too much! G-o-o-o-d night! Please send word to my mother that I've just died of starvation."

He lay prone on the ground while the others still stared.

"Didn't ve got no eats like dem scouts what you talk about?" the rotund Carl demanded. "Ach, come on home aready."

"You should worry, you only live around the corner," said Will Dawson. "Look at *us!*"

"That shows what kind of a scout you're not," Pee-Wee finally exploded, launching his wrath upon poor Ben. "You had to pile everything in the car because you were a quitter when I came down here to start a drive and scoutishly scoutch scout——"

"Shift into second," Dorry Benton called.

Pee-Wee paused for breath. "Now I got a chance to get some fellers started and start a lot of patrols," he roared, "and maybe even have an Eagle Scout and everything and go to South Africa and you dump all our eats in the brook!" He concluded with the longest *gee whiz* (we shall not attempt to write it) in the whole history of his scout career. Indeed, if it could have been stood on end it would have reached the sky.

Little Claudius cast wondering eyes upon his scout hero, amazed at the velocity of his words

in denouncing poor Ben. And Carl Gluttenheimer's pudgy face was not pleasant to look at, so disappointed was he. But Pee-Wee did not care.

"That's the kind of a scout you are, to stand in my way," he roared on. "That's the kind of a scout you are to raffle—I mean baffle the Boy Scouts of America!"

All the while, Roy, having come to life again, was standing at the rough dining board soberly breaking up an elephant animal cracker into thirteen pieces. With one of these crumbs he solemnly approached Carl.

"Welcome to the scout feast," he said. "And remember what mama told you—and don't overeat!"

CHAPTER XVI

ONE FLEW AWAY

CARL glanced up at Roy with something like disgust. He could not see the joke—far from it—and looked frowningly down upon the cracker crumb resting in his outstretched palm.

This provoked a roar of mirth from all of the onlookers, that is, all except Ben and Pee-Wee, Unlike Carl, they could see the joke but would not bring themselves to laugh at it. Ben felt he had done enough damage to his partner's grand scheme without indulging in amusements. And Pee-Wee was too steeped in his wrath to laugh at this latest absurd antic of Roy's.

Carl continued to stare down upon the guileless crumb. Then he became vaguely aware that it was the cause of all the unseemly mirth. With an angry mutter he threw it to the ground.

"It's maybe you're trying to make a fool by me, yes?" he queried angrily. "You bring us here for noddings ven you make promises what we

should be scouts und giff us a nice big dinner. Den in de end the dinner iss a big joke by giffing us crumbs and laughing what fools we are, huh! I go by my house now und I don't want no more of your scout business, yet!" He turned his flabby self around and walked off with ponderous steps.

Roy gave a loud whoop and fell into Westy's outstretched arms. "Kid," he said between gales of laughter, "you're guilty of advertising under false pretenses, do you know that?"

Pee-Wee glared. "I'm not because it was an accident and anyhow I'm not sorry he's gone. I'm not sorry he won't be a scout because he's too fat to want to do anything and besides if he was in my patrol we couldn't have any fun because all he'd want to do is eat," he shouted.

"People in gasoline tanks shouldn't throw matches around," Westy said soberly.

"You're right, Wes," said Roy straightening up. "The kid can't have anyone in his patrol who eats more than he does. He has a name to live up to and he mustn't have any rivals like Carl. Pee-Wee must have the food for himself. The only difference between them is that Carl Glutten-

heimer gets fat from eating and Pee-Wee eats off the fat."

Cutter and Eaton and little Claudius were getting restless. After all, they were only boys and they had been deprived of their Sunday dinner. Hunger is one thing and loyalty another and Westy sensed the situation from their roving glances and shifting feet. And the hostile glances that Pee-Wee was sending in Ben's direction were not lost upon him either.

"Say, I tell you what," he said like a true mediator. "Let's all turn our pockets inside out and see what we can contribute to this swell feed. We'll roast the potato just as if it was a dozen or more. And we'll heat up the can of spaghetti and for dessert we'll eat the cookies—we'll *make* things go around."

"Now that old Glutton's gone home we'll only have to divide up the six cookies in twelve pieces," chimed in Bad Manners. "That won't be stretching the dough too far, will it?"

"I'll say not," Roy returned. "We'll each have an eye out of the potato."

"What'll we do with the exasperated milk?" Artie asked.

"I've got a bar of Hershey's milk chocolate in my pocket," Westy answered. "It's a little bent and dim but still in the race and we can make cocoa out of it. One square to each cup."

"That's a go," said Warde, and he secured the lonely potato with a great flourish.

Someone else brought out the spaghetti and for the next few seconds there was confusion and a general upheaval of scout pockets being emptied out upon the rough dining board. Never before had the Green in Hickson's Crossroads witnessed such a conglomeration of junk. Never before had the lonely memorial echoed to such a riotous thud of falling fish hooks and bait and safety pins—in short, all the paraphernalia that eventually finds its way into the pockets of boyhood.

Little Claudius and his two friends soon imbibed this spirit of good fellowship and walked bravely over with the rest to add their bit to the motley heap. Very solemnly then did Roy proceed to separate the chaff from the wheat and soon succeeded in bringing to Ben's sad face the faintest trace of a smile.

"Who said we couldn't eat!" Roy exclaimed as Pee-Wee unwillingly added his generous share.

But like everyone else he could not help himself when the Silver Fox leader got started.

Who could?

Roy gathered up a handful of the choicest tidbits of the lot and deposited them evenly around the dining board at twelve places. In their humble way they represented several branches of the confectioners' industry. There were pieces of chewing gum, stale bits of almond bars, sticky butter scotch wrapped in stickier paper, gumdrops hardened into glacier-like consistency and numerous other aged delicacies too numerous to mention.

Little Claudius' face broke into a broad smile. Pee-Wee saw it and instantly bethought himself of the necessary business that would make the three boys into scouts. He was determined to strike while the iron was hot—nothing should stand between him and his hopes again. He hurried up to his recruits, birch bark and all, satisfied that they were still under the spell of Roy's mirth.

They made a very solemn occasion of it, that is, Pee-Wee did. When the weighty matter was settled he turned to Ben. "Anyway I've got three to start with," he said. "That Carl Glutten-

heimer, he was a quitter just like—just like——"

"Go on, kid, say it," said Ben patiently. "Say I was going to be one. I'll admit it, but I'm not going to quit now. I'll telephone home and tell them they won't see us until we've scouted every scout worth scouting in Hickson's Crossroads!"

"Atta boy," Roy yelled. "We'll all telephone —we'll all scroutch here together until the kid signs up this whole berg—even little Glutton."

Pee-Wee's frown was instantly transformed into a smile. Then a look of perplexity crossed his brow. "Gee whiz though, if you're all going to stay tomorrow we've got to have eats and I bet none of you have so much money either. Another thing we've got to have lots of eats because if we don't we can't get them to join so easy and I only have fifty cents—it costs a lot to feed a couple of patrols."

"We'll scrape up something between us," said Bad Manners. "It might only be sand but it'll sure be something. Haven't you got any resources, kid?"

"That's a good idea," said Roy. "The kid can feed us on that."

Pee-Wee turned darkly upon them. "This is no

time for fooling. It's serious and we've got to find a way because gee whiz I'm starved right now."

"If you're starved," said Roy, "we're a small sized famine. But what care we! Haven't we got a whole can of spaghetti and a nice roasted potato and Hershey's cocoa and twenty different kinds of dessert, haven't we?"

"We have!" they answered unanimously.

Roy immediately took charge of the spaghetti and opened it. That was the cue for one and all to sit down and around he came spearing an elusive string apiece for them with a thick stick which had been whittled down to a fine point.

Into the outstretched hand of each laughing boy he placed the wriggling string and nine times did he miss it. Before Pee-Wee retrieved his for good and all it had a fine coating of mud clinging tenaciously to it.

To finish up the party Roy brought forth a package of life savers and passed them around solemnly. "These are in case you get indigestion," he announced. "If the spaghetti doesn't kill you the life savers will."

CHAPTER XVII

RESOURCES

FIVE minutes later they rose and put the camp in order again. It wasn't five minutes' work to be sure, but they carried out their little game of makebelieve well. Roy went around with a toothpick projecting from his mouth.

"I got a piece of bone from that chicken," he explained to Ben. "It's in my tooth."

"Gee whiz, it's all right to fool," Pee-Wee said disgustedly, "but today's Sunday and we can't buy any eats and if it wasn't for those stale crumbs from the cookies I wouldn't know I had anything to eat!"

"Now who's a quitter!" said Roy.

"This is my rally isn't it and was I the one to spoil it?" he thundered back. But out of the corner of his eye he observed Claudius staring inquiringly. In a flash Pee-Wee summed it all up. He must show his hand—the hand of scouting. He couldn't afford to lose the three recruits.

"I know what, I know what!" he shouted. "I've got a dandy idea."

"Which one?" Roy asked him.

"Shut up!" Pee-Wee answered. "This isn't nonsense because I'm going to hike back the road a little ways and see if there's a hot dog place near here. Maybe Ben and I passed one on our way here yesterday and I didn't see it."

"That isn't possible," said Roy.

"Will you listen!" he thundered. "It's for all of you like because I promised to feed you if you came up here and loaned me the tent. So I'm going to see if I can get twelve hot dogs for fifty cents and that's how much I've got altogether."

"The hot dogs and the fifty cents?" Roy asked.

"You're just a fool," Pee-Wee said disdainfully. "Now I'm going to buy—"

"All right! Hurry!"

"You'll not buy anything," Ben interposed quietly, but firmly. "I've got a dollar and a half and it was me that did the damage." He brought the money out of his pocket and handed it to Pee-Wee. "We'll ride in the flivver too, you don't have to walk it, kid."

"I know I don't," said Pee-Wee, "but on account of Claudius and the others I thought how it would be nice to sort of initiate them into scouting like and take them along on their first hike."

"A hot dog like on an empty stomach," said Roy. "That's what I call hot stuff."

"It isn't going to be far, is it?" Pee-Wee demanded in a near rage.

"How do I know?" Roy answered. "How can I tell where you'll land when you start out hiking for hot dogs? You're just as likely to end up in one place as another if not more so."

"Now Tibbels can see what a fool you are, talking like that," he shouted. "Anyway I've got my compass haven't I and instead of thinking serious like a scout should you can only say nonsensical things."

"Absolutely," said Roy. "Someone's got to say them, so it might as well be me."

"Thinking like a serious scout," said Westy, "I just had a serious thought. We'll go down to the brook while you're gone and fish. Then we'll have a regular feed. Hot dogs and fish!"

"Atta boy, Wes!" said Roy. "Maybe we'll fish a fish that has the can of salmon. We'll use Pee-Wee's can opener for bait."

"That's a good idea, Roy," said Bad Manners. "Maybe we could even get back some of the potatoes with a paring knife."

"You never can tell," Roy agreed. "If we fish up that much there's a chance for the chocolate cake. Maybe if we threw some baking powder into the brook the cake would rise, huh?"

"You're all crazy—now I know it," Pee-Wee shouted disgustedly. "There's no use trying to make you talk sense."

Despite that utterance, he did feel hopeful. The idea of getting the potatoes out of the brook sounded feasible to him—perhaps even the salmon. The brook was not deep. With the hot dogs added and also some cake (he had in mind that one can purchase odd dainties at refreshment stands), the combination would not be so bad with which to impress the recruits. In point of fact, his spirits rose to such a remarkable degree that he felt he could afford to act indifferent about it, now that relief was in sight.

"Anyhow, we don't have to worry," he as-

sured Claudius. "A scout should have resources in emergencies like this and we can go in the woods on our way and I'll show you what you should eat sometime in case you're lost and likely to starve to death."

"That's a very good thing, kid," said Roy. "They're likely to starve to death. You better let the kids go home before you——"

"Say, will you mind your own business and shut up!" Pee-Wee roared. "Did I ever starve to death or go hungry, did I?"

"Not while you're home in your kitchen or near a lunch room," Roy answered.

Pee-Wee glared at him in withering scorn. Then he turned to the puzzled looking recruits. "Come on fellers," he said. "I bet I'll even show you how you can hunt out chipmunks and squirrels' holes so's you can live on the nuts they hide only they don't store them up in summer—they start in the fall to do that."

"Are you going to wait?" Artie Van Arlen asked.

"Wait for what?" Pee-Wee screamed.

"For fall," Artie answered.

Pee-Wee disdained to answer that. His pres-

tige with the recruits had been threatened too much as it was. Consequently he walked off with a martial step and after a moment's hesitation the trio followed him as if they were not yet quite sure of themselves in scouting.

The sun was not shining quite as briskly as in the morning. A damp breeze from the east blew the leaves inward on the old elm tree and some smoke from a distant locomotive trailed down in a thick haze over the horizon. Roy gazed up at these ominous signs like some sagacious weather prophet, then winked.

"Hey there, kid," he called lustily to Pee-Wee. It's going to rain, I think. Maybe you'd like us to come after you with your rubbers and umbrella, huh?"

Pee-Wee stopped and sent a dark look back to the mirthful Roy. "Maybe you can mind your business because if it rains I got sense enough to know what to do without you butting in."

"You'll do just as the frogs do when it rains then, hey, kid?" Roy persisted.

"What about the frogs, huh?" Pee-Wee asked curiously. "What do they do, huh?"

"They hop in the water to get out of the rain," Roy shouted.

"I thought so, I thought so!" Pee-Wee thundered back through the quiet Sunday afternoon. "I knew you'd take me for a fool!"

"Don't mention it," said Roy. "If there's anything I said I'm sorry for, I'm glad of it."

"I don't hear!" Pee-Wee screamed and walked away.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOT DOGS AND HOT DOGS

PEE-WEE was in his element at last. He had the stage all to himself. Once more he was the star scout shining without any bantering Roys or Arties or any of the Silver Foxes who so loved to dim his glory. He drank in his freedom.

Thunder rattled in the east. "If it does rain it won't amount to anything," Pee-Wee remarked. "I can tell by the clouds that it won't because we learn that in scouting too. It sort of comes under astronomy but that isn't what you get the Star Scout badge for. That's just a lot of Roy's nonsense like he's always talking. Don't ever listen to him if you want to be a serious scout. I keep observant and that's how I learn all these things—*everything*. Even I can tell you it won't rain for a long while yet I bet, because that thunder is away off."

"Gee, I hope it doesn't rain before we get back," little Claudius ventured timidly. "I

wouldn't want to get my clothes wet. They're new."

"So're mine," said Hillman Cutter.

"My mother'd give it to me good if I get mine wet, I know that," Stumpy Eaton chimed in.

"Gee whiz!" Pee-Wee exclaimed vociferously. "If you want to be scouts you can't be mama's boys, always afraid of getting your feet wet and things like that. You have to be tough sort of and get used to everything like the pioneers did. Anyway after you're initiated and get your scout clothes you won't have to worry about the weather. Gee whiz, we get soaked hundreds of times a year."

Hillman Cutter gazed at the martial splendor of Pee-Wee not a little admiringly. He had heard of boys who were allowed that much sought after privilege of getting "soaked" without receiving a reprimand from their parents. But never had he met or talked with an actual offender before.

"Don't you ever get the dickens for it or anything?" he asked incredulously.

"No, what for?" Pee-Wee returned. "Gee whiz when you're in the scouts, parents aren't so fussy. That is they know we're all right and

everything—they know that from the Handbook because a feller is truthful and all and that we're to be trusted. Even we've gone on hikes where we've had to blaze new trails through mountains and when we got back our clothes were all torn sometimes and our fathers and mothers don't say anything because they learn that it's necessary to be in danger sometimes."

Stumpy Eaton and little Claudius were also visibly impressed. Scouting opened up more than one avenue of freedom to the boy harassed by Sunday clothes. They suddenly longed to get into khaki.

A little further on they came to a shady spot under some weeping willows. The main road takes a decided turn just there, diverging easterly. It was hot and sultry and they stopped at that point to listen to Pee-Wee who had fallen into his old habit of relating some of the weird tales that he so unconsciously connected with scouting.

It need not be explained that any of these dark, hushed mysteries were found in the Handbook. They were secrets of the scouting of an earlier day—a day when scouting and Indian lore were kindred spirits. And Pee-Wee's recital

had to do with woodland trails and pungent herbs—herbs that possessed a certain magic power when brewed.

Can you get herbs like that in the woods around here?" little Claudius asked humbly.

"Sure, you can," Pee-Wee answered. "I've read how a man can live on the tea from them without anything else to eat. It's magic—geee whiz, even you can brew it right in the woods—I could do it myself if I had to because I can light a fire without matches. That's what I was going to show you last night and how I can even light a fire in the rain, only you fellers went to the circus instead."

There was no denying that all three had fallen for Pee-Wee, hook, line and sinker as the saying goes. Hillman Cutter looked at the hero, captivated. "Will you show us now?" he asked.

"Show you what?" Pee-Wee asked quickly.

"Those herbs and things."

"Sure," Pee-Wee said, albeit a trifle disconcerted. Then: "Say, we better get those hot dogs first, huh?"

The little boys nodded amiably. They were quite willing to wait and stood to one side of the

road as a high-powered car came speeding up the highway.

"Hey," Pee-Wee shouted as it drew up, "have you seen any hot dogs on your way here?"

A pleasant-faced man at the wheel nodded jovially. "Sure," he answered and slowed down. For a moment he turned and looked back along the road. Then he smiled, rather thoughtfully. "See that white fence way down there?" he asked Pee-Wee.

The little scout nodded.

"You'll find some down there—good big ones," the man laughed. Then he drove on.

The little band hiked on, Pee-Wee anxiously watching as the white fence appeared nearer and nearer. Despite the hazy film that almost obliterated the sun now and then, it grew steadily warmer. Stumpy removed his coat.

The shining white fence encircled a field of waving wheat and a farmer stood just inside it watching the boys coming along the road. No sign was there of any house or refreshment stand near the fence. The farm house lay a considerable distance to the south.

Two large dogs lay panting at the farmer's

feet. Neither moved as the scout addressed their master. "Say mister," he said gazing about to see if he had overlooked anything in the form of a refreshment stand, "a man told us we'd find hot dogs down here by this fence but I don't see anything around."

The farmer stared at Pee-Wee, quizzically. "What man told yer that?" he inquired.

"A man in a big car just a few minutes ago," he answered. "He said we'd find some here."

The farmer threw back his shoulders and laughed heartily. "Wa'al, he wa'nt a-tellin' yer sech an awful whopper at that, youngster," he said. "These here dogs ain't cold—not by a dern sight!"

Pee-Wee frowned down upon the sleeping, heat-ridden animals. Little Claudius giggled audibly and Stumpy chuckled. Hillman sought refuge in a smile.

"He thinks he's a smart feller, I bet," said Pee-Wee trying to appear composed. "Anyway we didn't go out of our way for him so it's not such a joke and besides it's too warm for anybody to get funny."

"It's sure hot," the farmer agreed. "If you

youngsters are a-lookin fer hot dogs on this road, ye'll have ter go a mile further 'fore ye come ter a stand. But if yer want a shady walk yer kin cut through the woods 'bout quarter o' a mile 'n ye'll come out onter a back road where thar's a stand like yer lookin' fer. Yer kin git as many hot dogs there as ye want, I reckon, and not live ones either!"

They left the farmer and Pee-Wee hurried ahead, eager to get the hot dogs and start back again for the cool, shady green. But his recruits were now indifferent about returning so quickly to their native heath. Even a gnawing sensation in the pit of their stomachs could not down their desire to see and know more of the scouting that their organizer had so strongly visualized for them. They had had their initial introduction and a little glimpse of the vagabond, almost primitive, existence lived by their leader was not enough. They wanted to rove in the mysterious woods and dally among the herbs—to see the diminutive scout produce results.

Certainly Pee-Wee had bitten off far more than he could chew.

CHAPTER XIX

CAUSE AND EFFECT

PEE-WEE stepped into the woods path, meditatingly. His various weapons of scouting attached to his belt rattled audibly in the tomb-like quiet. He jumped over a rock in his path and the can opener struck the aluminum frying pan a resounding bang.

Hillman Cutter received an inspiration. "Hey, can you brew that tea in your frying pan?" he asked.

"Sure," Pee-Wee answered half-heartedly. "But gee whiz, we'd have to go deep in those woods to get the herbs and it's full of thickets and things there you can see from here. There isn't even any trail that I can see."

"Wouldn't that be blazing new trails like you told us before?" little Claudius queried timidly.

Pee-Wee's expression was one of disgust but none of his recruits saw it. He went on thoughtfully without answering, and courageously Stumpy

Eaton suggested, "You've got an axe, it wouldn't be hard for you. Show us how you blaze a trail!"

"Yeh, show us!" Hillman urged.

"Say," Pee-Wee shouted, angling for time, "don't you fellers know this is Sunday? Gee whiz, it's hard work blazing a new trail and who wants to work on Sunday especially when it's such a hot day and another thing it's easy for you fellers to tell me because you couldn't do it. Anyhow we came out looking for hot dogs and we can't waste time because the fellers'll be thinking we got lost or something and Roy'll have a lot of nonsense about it."

In the silence that followed Pee-Wee thought he had duly squelched his ambitious recruits. But far from it, Hillman Cutter and Stumpy were not to be squelched. Unlike little Claudius, they did not see in their future leader any of the proverbial power that would move mountains. To them he was simply a scout adorned by a varied assortment of kitchen utensils—a scout who possessed some secrets of magic. It would be safe to say that that was the wand of their admiration.

Hillman and Stumpy would have been well nicknamed, Cause and Effect. They had distinc-

tive passions in that direction and they were not to be let down so easily. "You don't have to blaze a new trail far," Hillman said. "Maybe in just a few feet you'll find those herbs."

"Yeh," Stumpy applauded. "And you can brew them when we get back. I just want to know what it tastes like. 'Nother thing, you got old clothes on—it won't hurt."

Pee-Wee could not afford to protest further. He had not lost sight of the fact that his name as a scout was at stake. He wished fervently that it wasn't but then there are martyrs in every worthy enterprise.

And so he moved out of the nice, smooth woods trail into the prickly thicket while the recruits stood back watching. He swung his axe from left to right cutting down the undergrowth. He kept his eyes upon the damp earth, prayerfully hoping that the elusive herbs would be nestling somewhere near but, to his utter disgust, nothing but moss appeared.

He had blazed a trail for some hundred and fifty feet or more when a tremendous clap of thunder sounded above them. He turned to find his recruits following him, patiently, expectantly.

"Now you see, now you see!" he roared at them. "Now it's going to rain and here we are in the middle of the woods and you'll get your Sunday clothes wet just like you were afraid of!"

Hillman Cutter raised critical eyes to the darkening skies above the tree tops. "You said it wasn't going to amount to anything before," he said complacently. "You said you could tell by the clouds, didn't you?"

"I said it looked that way then, didn't I?" Pee-Wee shouted. "Gee whiz, what's an hour ago got to do with now anyhow! We've been in these woods so long anything could happen in that time, couldn't it? We shouldn't have started blazing this trail and it's all account of——"

Another peal of thunder crashed around them. In its wake came a faint cry, so faint that they could not be sure whether it was some woodland echo or the vibration of the elements.

They stood perfectly still and listened. A deafening roar seemed to split the heavens and a flash of lightning skimmed crazily over a stately evergreen nearby. Instinctively, they moved closer together.

The echo of it had not long died away when

the cry came again, much clearer than before. It seemed to rise out of the heart of the woods. The boys gazed wonderingly at each other.

Again it came—louder, more plaintive. It was a girl's cry. All Pee-Wee's scouting instincts were aroused. He threw back his shoulders valiantly.

The voice shrieked, "HELP!"

CHAPTER XX

JUST FILM

PEE-WEE had many shortcomings but no one could say of him that he lacked moral courage or valor in crucial moments. And his recruits instantly recognized the real hero in khaki when he called, "Where are you?"

"Here!" the girl answered. *"Hurry!"*

"It's serious, that's what it is," he told them. "Maybe it's a girl that's been kidnapped or something you can't tell; even maybe she's dying!"

This portentious announcement brought forth a murmur from the little group. Hillman and Stumpy had not thought of Cause and Effect. They thought only of some beauty in distress and they felt proud of the quick response that their leader had shown.

Another crash from the heavens brought them into action. Pee-Wee slashed his way right and left through the thicket. Gone were all thoughts

"SHOW US HOW YOU BLAZE A TRAIL!" THEY URGED.

of hot dogs—gone were all attempts at boasting of futile things. Here was the flaunting, vainglorious scout soul of Walter Harris at last laid bare to scouting and, happily, not found wanting.

He formed a megaphone with his two chubby hands. "Coming!" he hallooed lustily. *"Keep—hope!"*

In answering the voice sounded very near. *"All right! Hurry!"*

Pee-Wee darted head first into the undergrowth again, oblivious of the brambles scratching his hands and face and tearing great holes in his new woolen hose. Such temerity was bound to have its effect upon his followers and without a moment's hesitation they dashed after him receiving the blows from nature's own weapons as bravely as their leader. Hillman laughed recklessly as a giant thorn ripped a pocket from its moorings.

Little Claudius' right foot slipped in a hidden mudhole completely disfiguring his brightly polished shoe. But he giggled in defiance of such a pretty misfortune. Pee-Wee felt proud of them all.

It began to rain—in buckets.

"Where—are—you?" the girl called shrilly and a trifle impatiently.

"We must be right near you," Pee-Wee answered. "Wait a minute!" He turned to the boys. "I got a dandy scheme and I'm going to shinny up that tree because if she's so near as she sounds I can see her right away. That's a scout trick and it mostly always works."

Little Claudius gasped with astonishment as the redoubtable scout shinnied up the tree. Hillman and Stumpy threw their skepticism to the far winds and gazed with hearty approval at Pee-Wee's short legs now dangling over a broad limb.

"I see her! *I see her! I see you!*" he called. "Gee whiz, don't you see me?"

"I think I do," the girl answered. "Hurry, *please!*"

"Sure!" Pee-Wee roared, clambering down again in breathless excitement. "Geeee whiz," he said, as he jumped down on the ground, "That girl's standing in a swamp like right over there."

They all ran. The rain beat down upon them furiously and suddenly stopped. At least one

theory of Pee-Wee's had been correct. Stumpy smiled. "Jiminy, I'm soaked but I don't care, do you, Hill!" he asked with bated breath.

"Nah," answered Hillman.

"We got to hurry because she's holding a camera close to her like as if she's sinking," Pee-Wee panted over his shoulder. "Even maybe she could be in quicksand for all we know and there's a trail right near her where I bet she was first and I bet stepped into it accidental—I mean the swamp."

Neither Hillman, Stumpy or Claudius had time to comment upon Pee-Wee's statement. They emerged from the thicket and came upon the tragic sight of a pretty young girl standing in about two feet of mud. As the scout had told them she was hugging a folding camera close to her.

She too had been pretty well drenched by the downpour but smiled bravely as the boys approached. With his true scout's eye, Pee-Wee noted that there was only a slight embankment from where the girl stood to level ground. It couldn't have been more than four feet he knew

and was within easy reach for her if something wasn't holding her down. He was sure that it was quicksand.

He raced to the edge of the embankment with the other boys close on his heels. Bleeding faces and torn clothes were nothing compared to the anxiety they felt for this pretty young creature.

"Oh, I'm so glad there's more than one of you," she sighed smilingly. "Can any of you use a camera?"

What queer things girls were, Pee-Wee thought. In danger as she surely was, and asking such a question.

"I can use a camera," little Claudius piped up timidly and trying to tuck his Sunday necktie under his wet blouse.

"Say, hey, are you in quicksand in there?" Pee-Wee shouted.

She smiled sweetly back at the scout. "You're a little dear for coming here," she said. "Don't you think it's too thrilling for words that I'm lost in these woods and stepped right into this swamp besides?"

"Say. . . ." Pee-Wee began again.

"My shoes are ruined too and I must look a

fright," she trilled on heedless of Pee-Wee's incredulous stare. "My clothes are soaked but this is such a lark. Here, little boy," she said to Claudius and tossed the camera into his outstretched arms.

"Some game girl!" Stumpy exulted in a breathless whisper.

Pee-Wee darted head first into the underheld out his hands. "Say, do you think I can pull you out just like this?"

She threw back her head and laughed. "What a little hero you'd make," she said. "I never expected anything quite so thrilling as this."

"Say. . . ." poor Pee-Wee tried again.

"The little boy must take a picture of me standing here first," she interposed. "The light isn't so good, I know, but he ought to get enough of a picture to convince them that my life was in danger. Take the picture, little boy!"

She drew her fair features up anxiously as Claudius clicked the shutter. Pee-Wee was almost lost for words. "Hey, aren't you sinking?" he shouted once more.

She shook her head. "Silly little boy," she laughed. "I just want you to make out you're

rescuing me from a terribly dangerous swamp. Hold out your arms and when I reach them the little boy must take another picture."

Pee-Wee scratched his head. She didn't look as if she were insane but she certainly acted it, he thought. Then she moved toward the embankment with ease. "What are you trying anyway?" he thundered a bit rudely. "What kind of a game is this?"

She shook a roguish finger at him. "Don't get peeved, little boy," she laughed. "It isn't a game exactly because I'm really lost in the woods and I really accidentally stepped into this big mudhole when I was trying to take a picture of a beautiful bird. It was then that I got the idea and besides I heard your nice deep voice." She stopped before him, mud dripping from her stockings.

"The idea for what?" Pee-Wee demanded to know.

"The idea of standing here and calling for help so someone would come and take a picture of me. If I told the girls that I was lost and stepped into a swamp they wouldn't believe me so I was determined to give them proof. Now I have it, so hold out your arms!"

Pee-Wee did as he was told, unwilling. But he was helpless to do other than obey her command. Also he had once heard that it was good to humor people who seem to be mentally unbalanced. Consequently he submitted to the ordeal of having her lean heavily upon his arm in a very dramatic attitude while little Claudius once again clicked the shutter. Stumpy and Hillman looked on in speechless amazement.

When that was over she clambered up onto the bank. "That's that," she said. "At last I can show the girls something really startling."

That remark sounded quite rational to Pee-Wee and he wondered. "Say, what girls are you talking about anyway?" he shouted trying to emulate a rumble of thunder that was dying away with the storm.

She looked at the scout sweetly. "Why the girls in school—a boarding school where I go—where I was just coming back from, I mean," she said.

Pee-Wee was disgusted. "I wish I'd of known that," he grumbled angrily. "All I say is, I wish I'd of known it—*geeeee whiz!*"

CHAPTER XXI

PEE-WEE IN LUCK?

"You've been very sweet, you boys, to come to me so quickly," she said ignoring Pee-Wee's rude behavior. "I'll only ask one more favor of you and that's to help me get out of these awful woods.

"Our car broke down on one of those terrible back road detours and the chauffeur had to walk back to a service station. That's how I came to wander in here while I was waiting and now I've forgotten in which direction the car is."

"That shows how girls are not observant," Pee-Wee said to her. "Because you ought to know where you came from anyhow. Gee whiz, a scout always remembers those things—that's why you never hear of them getting lost and besides we're scientific from carrying a compass."

The girl seemed suddenly to become aware of Pee-Wee's khaki. Hillman too was conscious of a loss about his leader's person.

"Gosh," he said portentously. "Hey, Harris, maybe you don't know it but you lost your belt and everything that goes with it!"

Pee-Wee took a step or two backward. He looked down at his plump waist, plainly horrified. *"Geeee whiz!"* he exploded. "That's fine that is. That's what happens on account of girls and their fool ideas. They're hard luck that's what. Now I've lost all my stuff, even my scout axe in our hurry to get here—gee whiz!"

The girl was entirely ignorant of the bereavement that her folly had caused. She could not have guessed of the splendor that was Pee-Wee's before the storm had somewhat dimmed his glory. Nor could she imagine how much a part of him was that magnificent display now lost—gone forever perhaps.

"Why, of course!" she suddenly exclaimed. "You're a scout, aren't you? A nice little boy scout!"

Pee-Wee scowled. "Are you just finding that out, huh?" he shouted, forgetting for a moment that chivalry too has its place in the Scout Handbook. "Are you just finding it out that on account of yourself I lost all my scout stuff—a good

belt and a albuminum frying pan and a can opener and my axe and a dozen other things that cost money! Just on account of you I lost them because when I heard you calling and all like a fool I thought you were dying or something and after all it's just nonsense that you wanted to take a picture to show to a lot of fools! The picture's a fake just like you are!" He had to stop for breath.

Hillman, Claudius and Stumpy were aghast at this bold denunciation of fair young girlhood. They shivered in cold contemplation of the outcome but to their amazement the girl laughed. "You're the snippiest little snip I ever did hear," she said. "But I know it's my fault and I'm sorry. That's all I can say."

Pee-Wee frowned. "Is that getting me back my scout belt and things and is that going to keep Claudius and Stumpy and Hill from getting the dickens because their Sunday clothes are all ruined almost because they came here too to help save you when it was only a joke?"

Her pretty face looked all contrition. "I'm awfully sorry, really. I'll try and make it up about the little boys' clothes if their parents scold

and I'll help you try and find your belt and things right now. Do you think you can go back the way you came?"

"Say, do you think I'm a baby or something?" Pee-Wee asked her, insulted at her low estimation of his scouting intelligence. "Gee whiz, I bet you don't know that scouts can tell all those things —I mean we always know trails we've blazed. Even I can tell if anyone else has been along a trail after I've been there."

The girl shook her head. "Isn't that wonderful!" she enthused. Then: "After you find your belt you can help me find the road. The chauffeur will be frantic if I don't show up soon."

Pee-Wee started back into the thicket and they followed. "Where were you going anyway?" he asked at length.

"I was going home to Hickson's Crossroads," she said. "I'm Catherine Dobbins."

The recruits gasped unanimously. Although they had heard of her they had never hoped to see her—not in such a personal way at least. She spent so little time in the sleepy town that few knew her by sight. Claudius backed away timidly but was reassured when he saw Pee-Wee smiling.

"I'm Walter Harris from Bridgeboro," he told her. "I was in your house yesterday even and I got your father to sign a permit for the circus and it's going to stay till Wednesday and my friend, Ben Maxwell and me polished up the memorial so people could read the names on it. We're camping on the green because I'm sprouting for—I mean I'm scroutching for scroutchs—I'm organizing a scout drive that's what I'm doing and these here fellers are recruits," he finished in a whirl.

Catherine laughed gaily. "What an excitable little boy you are."

"I'm a patrol leader, maybe I'll even be three patrol leaders—I mean I'll have three patrols," he said. "If I get more fellers to join in Hickson's Crossroads it'll be dandy only it's hard to make them join because they said they haven't any place to meet in. Gee whiz, there isn't a meeting hall in that burg."

Catherine followed him on thoughtfully. "Did you tell my father that?" she asked.

"Nah," Pee-Wee answered. "Gee whiz, I didn't have time only to ask him about the circus permit because the fellers said they'd join if I got

your father to sign it but anyway they didn't—they went to the circus instead."

Catherine had nothing to say to that. Pee-Wee attributed her silence to indifference but in that he was wholly mistaken. She had heard every word of the little scout's trials in Hickson's Crossroads and she was thinking it all out—hard. Her brother Dan had once wanted to be a scout, she remembered—he had pleaded to be one but their father had refused. And now Danny was gone, she thought.

She trudged on through the thicket trying to do her share in searching for the missing belt. A mist had settled over the woodland; thick, oppressive. And in her eyes was a mist of tears clouding her vision. Quickly she dashed them away.

After about ten minutes of futile searching, Pee-Wee stopped. "I'm going to climb a tree again," he announced. "I'm going to see where that trail is that we came on before we heard you."

"Don't you think you're on the right trail?" she asked him.

"Sure I am only sometimes things look differ-

ent after it's stopped raining. Sometimes bushes are bent to one side by the rain instead of by human beings and you can be fooled that way and go in the wrong direction," he said.

"Oh, do you think maybe we're not going to find it?" little Claudius asked fearfully.

"Who said we're not going the right way or we won't find it?" Pee-Wee shouted. "A scout can't guess about things so I'm going to climb the tree and make sure."

They watched him coming down, a bit disappointed looking. "What's wrong?" Catherine asked.

Pee-Wee scowled. "That's what comes, that's what comes of losing my belt. Now I can't see the trail and I don't know which way to go on account of my compass being gone too—geee whiz!"

"Can't you tell by the twigs and things like you said before?" Hillman reminded him.

"Can I tell when water is over everything and anyhow did I say we were lost?" Pee-Wee stormed. "Anyhow twigs aren't compasses and can I help it that I lost it?"

There was no answer to that. How could

there be? Even Stumpy was browbeaten into forgetting what effect twigs could have on a compass. They were only too relieved to know that the blame was surely Catherine's.

To be sure, Catherine's folly was providential. There is no telling whether Pee-Wee would have gotten lost in the event that her cries had not been heard. Certainly there is no denying that she and she only saved him from scout disaster.

By her folly so did he triumph.

CHAPTER XXII

OLD RELIABLE

After a few minutes' consultation with himself Pee-Wee decided that they should try and find their way back to the trail whence Catherine had come. They were wearily acquiescent.

Twilight had settled over the woodland but still no trail could he find. But then the greatest military strategists in history have been baffled by less. And Pee-Wee had the mist to contend with. It baffled and annoyed him but still he plodded on.

Catherine became grimly silent and the recruits had nothing to say. They had entirely lost the power of trying to concentrate on the various methods and disciplinary measures that their respective parents would use when they returned home.

Hillman doubted if they would ever see Hickson's Crossroads again. He said so in a plaintive wail.

"We're not lost unless we don't find our way back all night," Pee-Wee told him. "Do you think pioneers acted that way when they were lost in the wilderness? Do you think they cared about getting home or not? Gee whiz, if you want to be a scout you've got to get used to hardships —even I might get lost worse than this in the jungle when I go to East Africa with Martin Johnson. I might be eaten by a lion or something but I don't care!"

"I have my doubts," Catherine laughed. "I don't think a lion would dare to eat you, Walter. One roar from you would be enough."

"You can hypnotize them sort of," Pee-Wee said. "If they know you're not afraid of them they won't touch you only unless they're terrible hungry or starving maybe."

"I feel like a starved lion myself," Catherine said. "If we don't get out of here soon you'll have to pick us some berries or something that scouts are supposed to know about when they're lost in the wilderness."

Pee-Wee felt that he must stave off such a contingency at any cost. He didn't intend to be caught again. "Don't start complaining until

you have to," he said. "Gee whiz I'm not complaining and I didn't have any dinner—none of us did that's why I wouldn't want to eat berries on such an empty stomach."

Catherine laughed. "You poor boys! If you get me home tonight I'll make dad have the cook feed you all. Even your scout friends on the green."

That was sufficient to make Pee-Wee call for some help—loud, long and lustily. There was no answer but he felt hopeful. The prospect of a hearty meal was revivifying in itself.

Their figures looked like stealthy black shadows as they moved through the thicket. Then darkness came and they groped their way holding onto each other to keep together. But after a time the air seemed better, clearer, and it was little Claudius who sensed the meaning of it. "I—I think we're out of the woods," he said in his piping voice. "I think we're on a road."

They stretched out their arms exultantly. No thorns or prickly briers met their touch. "Gee whiz, I led you out all right anyway, didn't I?" Pee-Wee asked joyously.

Catherine giggled with sheer relief, "Yes, you

did, Walter," she admitted, "but see that you don't lead us back again. I don't think we ought to move because we don't know where we are or where we're going."

"What do you want us to do, stay in one spot until daylight so we can find out?" he shouted.

"I hardly hear you," she laughed. "But. . . ."

A rattling sound had made itself heard somewhere in the distance. "Maybe it's a rattlesnake," she said in a frightened voice.

"Do you think you can hear a rattlesnake for a mile maybe?"

The rattling became louder. Voices sounded above it and two headlights appeared throwing the narrow, rutty road into bold relief.

"Now it'll be all right just like I told you!" Pee-Wee yelled. "I led you out all right and now a car's coming so we weren't lost exactly, it was on account of the mist so can you say we were lost?"

"No," Catherine laughed good-naturedly "The woods lost us, I guess."

I doubt if Pee-Wee heard her answer. He hadn't eyes nor ears for anything but the approaching car whose rattle sounded strangely

familiar. It came up to them, snorted, chugged and stopped with a terrific explosion from the exhaust.

There was no mistaking Ben's flivver.

CHAPTER XXIII

VAIN REGRETS

"HEY, kid," Roy's rollicking voice came from the back seat, "where do you think you're going?"

"Gee whiz!" said Pee-Wee joyously. "Is it you —and where's Ben?"

"Here!" Ben answered hopping onto the running board without bothering to open the car door. "Where have you been, kid? I was so worried and I made them come out and help find you."

Pee-Wee felt remorseful and ashamed—ashamed that he had denounced Ben only that morning. And here as usual his friend was the one to be worried and the first one to think of coming to his aid. "Gee whiz, I'm glad you came," he said gratefully.

"Came!" Roy said hanging over the edge of the flivver. "We weren't caming—we were going back. We've been out hunting for you and

your cradle roll since before and after four O.M. and you're being broadcasted from every Chinese laundry in the country and . . ."

"Say, are you going to keep Catherine Dobbins standing here with mud all over her and she's starving to death and we are too, while you're talking like a fool?" Pee-Wee shouted breathlessly.

"I beg my pardon," said Roy. "I didn't know that a girl could stand behind you without seeing me—I mean me seeing her."

"Gosh, I'm glad you found her," Ben said. "Mr. Dobbins' chauffeur came back to the Crossroads and he was worried. I'm glad Pee-Wee found you," he said to her.

"It's you that found her! You found us so you found her and you get the credit, Ben!" Pee-Wee yelled.

"And you led us out of the woods," Catherine said, moved by Pee-Wee's willingness to entirely discredit himself. "After all, we're safe and sound and that's what counts."

"Where did you think you were going when we came along?" Westy asked, rising out of the back seat.

"How did I know in the dark?" Pee-Wee answered. "We were going, that's all I know because we were sort of lost."

"Again?" Roy asked.

"If you had kept on going you would have been back in Bridgeboro by morning," Artie Van Arlen said, adding his lanky presence to the scene.

Catherine was honored by occupying the front seat with Ben. The weary recruits were somewhere under the Silver Foxes and Pee-Wee was relegated to the floor. And they had no sooner started off than Westy reported that an angry Mrs. Tibbels and an angrier Mrs. Eaton and an irate Mrs. Cutter had stormed the scout camp in quest of their sons.

Pee-Wee vociferously explained their movements from the time they left Hickson's Crossroad's until the welcome lights of the flivver came into view. "Anyhow it was all right because we found Catherine," he concluded.

"What were you trying to show them in the woods?" Roy asked.

"Some herbs that I make magic tea out of," Pee-Wee answered.

"Did he show you where a turtle's neck goes in the summertime?" Roy queried.

"No, I didn't," said Pee-Wee. "Besides I lost my belt and can opener and compass—everything happened!"

"G-o-o-d night!" said Roy. "And we fished the salmon out of the brook."

"Don't get downhearted, Roy," Artie said soothingly. "We'll let the kid bite it open."

"There's not going to be any more fooling," Pee-Wee said. "I came up here with Ben to scroutch out scoutch—I came to organize patrols and all I've got is three recruits, geee whiz!"

"You won't have them after tonight," Roy said. "Their mothers won't let them have anything more to do with the scouts because you've starved them all day and kept them out besides."

"They wanted me to go in the woods—it was them that wanted me to go," Pee-Wee said in desperation. "I didn't keep them out and besides their mothers ought to be glad that they're not wounded or something the way we were lost. Gee whiz even I could have been wounded too."

"Next thing you'll be saying that you came out of the woods with a cedar chest and a wooden

leg," said Roy. "What became of the hot dogs?"

"I didn't get them and it doesn't matter because Catherine's going to give us something to eat from her house," Pee-Wee said triumphantly.

"Don't worry, kid," Ben said. "Everything's all right—we all called up home and we're going to stay until Tuesday. Your father said that is giving you plenty of time to scroutch and if we haven't enough food or money he said I'm to drive down tomorrow and get it."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," Catherine said sweetly. "You've been so lovely to me I'll see to it that the cook provides you with all you can eat."

Pee-Wee was elated. "Then we'll give a demonstration tomorrow, Ben, huh? We'll make it a rally like I wanted to have yesterday and we'll buy more marshmallows and everything. It'll be better maybe because when they see all the Silver Foxes they'll join," he roared.

"Foghorns should be seen and not heard," said Roy.

They went straight to the Dobbins' mansion when they got to Hickson's Crossroads. Catherine tripped in asking them to wait.

"Maybe it means that we'll get a reward for bringing her back," Pee-Wee said after the door had closed.

"Maybe Mr. Dobbins will ask us all to stay for the summer," Artie laughed. "There's about as much chance."

"Don't take the kid seriously, Art," said Roy. "They say people are never the same after they've been lost in the woods."

"You're a fool!" Pee-Wee roared.

"Sh!" Ben said.

Catherine came on tiptoe out of the door and leaned over the porch railing. "Father's so tired and he didn't feel like dressing again," she told them softly. "Now that he knows I'm safe he's gone to bed and I didn't have the heart to make him come out so you'll probably see him tomorrow. Now you boys wait until I go in the kitchen!"

"Maybe we'll have to mow the lawn tomorrow," Roy said. "They say he doesn't give away anything but advice."

"Shut up!" Pee-Wee said.

Catherine came stealing from around the side of the house, a basket under her arm. "I never

thought of it, boys," she said, "but this is Sunday night—cook's night off and what I have is all that I could find. She's so fussy about anyone snooping when she isn't around so I just grabbed what I could. It'll hold you over till tomorrow anyway."

About a block from the house Ben was forced to stop the flivver. Pee-Wee insisted on examining the basket before they went further. "I hope there's chicken sandwiches in it," he said in opening the cover.

"Never mind the sandwich part—the chicken is good enough for me," said Artie.

Pee-Wee uttered a long, "Geeeee whiz!"

The basket contained exactly two bottles of milk, two packages of Uneeda biscuits and a large chunk of cheese. They looked at each other mournfully.

"How's that going to go around for us all after we haven't had anything to eat all day?" Pee-Wee complained.

"Give me the answer and I'll ask you the question to it," said Roy. "It's better than chewing on the can of salmon anyway."

Pee-Wee closed up the basket and Ben drove

on. When they reached the green three feminine figures moved into view. Hillman, Stumpy and little Claudius sighed profoundly. It had been an unfortunate day for them.

"Gosh!" Hillman muttered.

"That's all right," Roy said. "You have nothing to worry about. Just leave it to Pee-Wee to explain. He'll make things fine if not worse."

"Are you starting in at a time like this," Pee-Wee said in a stage whisper.

"No," Roy said solemnly. "I was just thinking of asking them to stay and have some crackers and cheese—there's plenty of milk to go around."

But Roy was spared the asking. The mothers hurried their weary, penitent sons away quietly and firmly, not waiting to hear any explanation from the frantic Pee-Wee. "Now you see, now you see!" he wailed. "The whole thing's a failure and I bet they won't let them join now—I bet they won't!"

Roy shook his head. "It's too bad they didn't wait a minute, kid," he said. "I was going to try and explain to them what happened and see if I couldn't make things all right."

"Gee whiz, you couldn't have explained any-

thing," Pee-Wee lamented. "What could you have said, huh?"

"I was going to tell them that you only took the kids into the woods to show them that electric plants really and truly grow from bulbs," said the demon Roy.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN DARKEST AFRICA

PEE-WEE rolled himself into his blanket that night, discouraged, and feeling that never again would he see his three recruits. Their mothers were angry, he knew, and he feared that other mothers in Hickson's Crossroads would be warned also.

In the morning, however, he awoke with the sun and with it came hope. When they opened the tent flap they discovered that the cook from the Dobbins mansion had already paid them a visit. There was a generous supply of food—all that a party of camping scouts could ask for. Catherine had been as good as her word and Pee-wee's spirits rose accordingly.

Toward mid-morning when they were busy decorating the tent for the final drive, a little group of workmen approached the green. Each one was carrying a pickaxe and shovel.

One of the men came straight up to Ben and

smiled a friendly greeting. "I'm sorry," he said, "but we've got to dig up this here place—the whole of it. There's a leak somewhere's 'n we've got ter find out where. Mr. Dobbins told me ter tell you kids to move your stuff down the woods to Africa—he owns it and . . ."

"What's the name of it?" Roy asked stumbling out of the tent.

The man laughed. "I s'pose it does sound kind o' funny to call it that," he said. "But we've always called it Africa around here. A few blacks used to live there years ago. Nobody's there now but the name still hangs on somehow. Mr. Dobbins said it'll be a much nicer campin' place fer ye—much more private. Besides you'll be nearer the circus."

"What do we care about the circus?" Pee-Wee grumbled a while after when they were packing and moving their things. "Gee whiz, all the kids around here saw the circus Saturday night and they won't be going down that way again so how'll they know where we are if we go away and anyhow there isn't any lights—I mean there's no electricity there or nothing. Even I was planning to have a campfire tonight and all but how

can we have one when we can't see to make a fire even?"

"Ask me one question after another and I'll answer them all together," Roy said. "I'll leave it to Bad Manners if pincers aren't descendants of a monkey wrench!"

"What's such fool talk got to do with me?" Pee-Wee blazed. "Gee whiz, you fellers have got a lot of sympathy—I don't think— and just when I planned. . . ."

"I thought you wanted to go to Africa!" Artie reminded him.

"Sure I want to go to Africa," Pee-Wee shouted. "But not to that Africa because the one I want to go to has lions and elephants and. . . ."

"And it hasn't electric lights on safari either," Westy interposed. "You'll have to build your campfire in the dark when you go with Martin Johnson or you'll have to do it by searchlight."

"Well I haven't gone yet," Pee-Wee said, "Anyhow maybe Ben will paint a sign and tell them where we're camping."

"Sure I will, kid," Ben said. "We'll scout out these hick scouts yet, won't we?"

Pee-Wee looked grateful. "Even if I just get

one patrol, I'd be satisfied. Gee whiz, we ought to be able to get at least that much!"

Ben set about painting a sign, informing those who were scoutishly inclined that a big scout rally was to be held that afternoon in the heart of Africa. He added that nothing lurked in that dark jungle but a hearty welcome and a warm feed.

Noontime found them settled once more and eating a hearty lunch. After that was over and cleared away they adjourned to a large patch of moss outside the tent to await their guests. Pee-Wee had purchased his marshmallows—everything was in readiness.

Through the trees, they could see the cars driving down into the circus grounds. Little by little the crowd increased and soon the cries of the various barkers reached them.

"Suppose you paint another sign and tell them we've gone to lunch or something," Roy suggested to Ben. "We could go down to the circus and back again while we're waiting."

Pee-Wee glared. "Do you say that's not being a quitter?" he thundered. "Do you think I'd go after all that's happened and miss the chance

maybe. Gee whiz, if you fellers want to go you can."

"No, come to think of it I'd rather stay and help you eat up the marshmallows," Roy said. "We can't let them go to waste."

Pee-Wee scowled but said nothing. Hillman and Stumpy and Claudius—even they hadn't appeared. He began to feel that it was hopeless especially when the crowd disappeared inside the big tent. Ever so faintly they could hear the boom of the big bass drum. At intervals too, little bits of some popular melody floated on the wind and up to their woodland camp.

"Who'd ever have thunk that Africa was so quiet?" Roy said trying to rouse Pee-Wee into an argument of some kind. "Do you think they'd arrest me if I started to sing?"

Pee-Wee shook his head sadly. "Maybe we ought to go up to the green and see if the sign has been torn down," he said. "Maybe nobody has even stopped to read it, huh?"

"Don't kid yourself," Roy said. "They read everything around here—even the numbers on freight cars."

Pee-Wee's spirits were sinking fast. The after-

noon seemed to fly by and the circus crowds poured out of the big tent. They milled about the great field for ten or fifteen minutes, then dispersed. Ben turned to Roy and gave him a significant wink.

"What do you say, you fellers," he said, "if I ask you to stay here and watch while the kid and I go down to the field and peek around. Maybe they'll let us look at some of the wild animals that our friend Alonzo was talking about. When we come back then you fellers can go down."

That was agreed upon and a little later Ben had Pee-Wee tramping down toward the circus grounds. "If that rally of ours is a failure, kid," he said kindly, "it's just a failure—that's all. We're not going to let anything like that get us. If that bunch of false alarms that they have here in this burg don't come clean of their own accord then they're not worth having or going after. They make me sick, if you ask me!"

Pee-Wee tramped on silently. Then he spoke. "Anyhow I'll wait till it's dark and see," he said.

They almost ran into the gracious Mr. Alonzo Costello who welcomed them with outstretched

arms. He had been doing a flourishing business in Hickson's Crossroads and was indeed grateful to Pee-Wee.

"I will show you some of the most splendid animals in captivity," he enthused as he guided them to the animals' tent."

They were greeted with great roars and hisses as they entered and after some lengthy explanations on Mr. Costello's part they came to a group of small cages a little apart from the rest. A lion was in one and a lioness in the other and in a pen at the end of the row stood a baby elephant. "They are the property of Madame Ferelez," the circus man explained. "She loves her cats and her baby elephant. They are her special pets."

Pee-Wee shuddered.

A youngish man emerged just then from behind the cages. He was tall and slim and upon seeing the trio stopped and stood quietly by the cage of the lion.

There was something in his eyes that attracted Pee-Wee's attention. Perhaps it was a gentle, patient look—the scout did not know; could not tell. It was something he knew and felt instantly when he first saw him.

Pee-Wee could not wait until they had gotten past to ask Mr. Costello. The circus man shrugged his shoulders in answer. "I do not know exactly, my young friend," he said. "Indeed he seems a mystery to all of us but he is Madame Ferelez' most trusted assistant. The animals love him but I do not know why. He is very quiet always like someone in a trance."

Pee-Wee watched the fellow curiously. A vague remembrance of that face flashed through his mind. "Don't you know even where he comes from, mister?" Pee-Wee persisted.

"Ah, that is a question!" said Mr. Costello. "He told us that he came from Europe and that his comrades there called him Dutch. He spoke of being with German soldiers but more than that I do not know. It is quite possible, my young friends, that he is not altogether sound."

Ben, aroused by Pee-Wee's persistent questions, stared too. The haunting look in the fellow's eyes struck an answering chord in his also. What was it?

"Say, who does that feller remind me of, huh?" Pee-Wee asked Ben after they left the circus grounds.

"Jiminy, don't ask me—I'd like to know myself!" Ben answered. "It's funny we should both sort of remember his face from somewhere, isn't it?"

Pee-Wee stopped short. "Say listen, Ben," he said breathlessly. "Maybe I'm right and maybe I'm wrong—I don't know, but I think I'm right because his face reminds me. . . . Gee whiz, I hope I'm right!"

"What are you driving at, kid?" Ben queried. "What's bitten you all of a sudden?"

Pee-Wee started to walk straight across the field. "We're not going to camp yet, Ben," he said mysteriously. "I got an inspiration sort of. I'm not disappointed as much now as I was because, gee whiz, what I thought of just before is more important than scout rallies or drives or anything. Come on, we're going up to the Dobbins's."

Ben walked after him, puzzled.

CHAPTER XXV

A SCOUTING SCOUT

PEE-WEE and Ben were ushered into the Dobbins library. Catherine was sitting with her father and jumped up quickly to greet her little rescuer. Mr. Dobbins nodded in his usual curt manner.

"What is it, another permit you're after?" he asked Pee-Wee briskly.

Pee-Wee shook his head. "It's ten times more important than that Mr. Dobbins because it has a lot to do with you—I mean the reason Ben and I came here. I couldn't get any scouts to join up here in Hickson's Crossroads. I guess they don't want to bother because there isn't any place for them to meet."

Mr. Dobbins nodded. "Catherine has been telling me about that," he said. "I'm sorry they've acted like that, Harris."

"Gee whiz, I don't care now," said Pee-wee. "I cared before Ben and I went down to the circus

to see the animals but I don't care now. If they don't want to join they don't have to because I can go some other place. Anyway what's so important is that I want you and Catherine to come down to the circus with me right away!"

Mr. Dobbins was taken by surprise. Never before had he been commanded. His stern face was no less stern than before but his long, thin fingers laced and interlaced as he contemplated the sturdy looking little scout.

Catherine went over to her father's side. "Why the circus, Walter?" she laughed. "Will we find more scout stunts down there?"

Pee-Wee smiled. "Gee whiz, it's funny you said that because what I found out is a scout stunt sort of and it's good we went down there, Ben and me. Another thing I'm observant and that's why I'm so sure that I want you to come down because I bet you'll say yourself it's a scout stunt."

Ben was still quite puzzled. Catherine laughed heartily. "Of all things," she said. "You must be hiding something up your sleeve when you talk like that."

"I'm not hiding anything, but the circus is,"

"DANNY, DON'T YOU KNOW US?"

Pee-wee Harris in Darkest Africa. *Page* 205

Pee-Wee said hoping that his argument would move the glacier-like Mr. Dobbins. "If you'll only come down and see for yourself because it would be terrible if he should go away and you could never find out again!"

"He!" Catherine repeated.

"I'm just asking you to please *come,"* Pee-Wee pleaded.

Mr. Dobbins got up from his chair. Pee-wee smiled. "I'm going to trust you that this isn't any harum-scarum adventure that you're taking us on, young man," he warned. "It's only that I have a respect for your judgment, as flighty as you seem."

Pee-Wee could afford to take the rebuke with the compliment. He felt happy and he knew by Ben's smiling face that he too had guessed the secret.

They drove back to the circus grounds in the Dobbins' limousine. Mr. Costello watched them approaching with a certain dread that perhaps the hard old mill owner was going to revoke the permit—just when he was doing so well.

Pee-Wee quieted his fears however and explained to the circus man the real meaning of this

extraordinary visit. Not since he was a little boy had Mr. Dobbins been inside of a circus tent.

The little scout led them into the animals' tent, eagerly looking for that familiar face. The young man was sitting down alongside of the elephant's pen, apparently absorbed in a book. Pee-Wee stood aside to let Catherine go first.

"See if you can recognize that feller," Pee-Wee said breathlessly.

A hush seemed to pervade that noisy tent—even the animals seemed to sense that it was a crucial moment. Mr. Dobbins hung back at the entrance and wondered what surprise the queer little scout had planned for them.

Pee-Wee watched Catherine's face. She walked nearer and nearer the young man, her eyes registering, first fear then surprise and—*"Danny!"* she screamed.

The young man stood up and faced her. He smiled, but the haunting, distant look remained in his sad eyes. Mr. Dobbins seemed not to be able to move. He stared at the fellow as if he were watching the dead return to life.

Catherine ran up to the young man and threw her arms around him. "Danny!" she cried again.

"Danny, don't you know us? Dad and Catherine?" She clung to him, sobbing hysterically.

Mr. Dobbins seemed to find his tongue. "It's Danny, Catherine," he said falteringly. "There's no mistaking my boy!"

The old man walked up to his son and as he passed Pee-Wee he put out his hand and clasped the scout roughly but gratefully.

Ben and Pee-Wee and Mr. Costello walked out of the tent. For a long, long time Pee-Wee carried the picture of Danny Dobbins in his mind. He could not forget ever the strange bewildered look that came into his eyes at his sister's joyful cry.

CHAPTER XXVI

SAFARI

"CATHERINE said her father's going to take him to a specialist and everything to see if he can't get him to remember," Pee-Wee was telling them around their little campfire that evening. "She said he remembers being in a German prison camp and that he was sent to France afterward and that he worked there for awhile before he came to America. He worked his way over as a stoker and I bet he didn't even remember that he was over here before. All he remembers is that he's been wandering around for years and years."

"That's more than you can remember," said Roy. "You can't even remember when you were born."

"Don't talk like a fool," Pee-Wee said. "No wonder we didn't get any recruits—you fellers should have stayed in Bridgeboro because I think they're afraid of you here!"

"Is that a nice way to talk to a Sterling Silver Fox?" Roy asked. "I thought you didn't care before whether they came or not."

"I don't," said Pee-Wee, "only your hard luck because you're such a fool. Anyway I'll be glad to get back to Bridgeboro and up to Temple Camp again. Gee whiz, this is an awful lonesome place this Africa is!"

"What are you going to do when you get to Africa?" Artie asked him. "You don't know nothing yet."

"Anyhow there's always a lot of people when you go on safari," Pee-Wee informed them. "It says so in the book. They take dozens of black men and all, so even if it is a jungle I bet it isn't as lonesome as this Africa."

Shortly after that they put out their campfire and crushed out every glowing ember until the place was black as pitch. Not even a faint shadow could they see through the thick growth of trees.

Perhaps it was the picture that Pee-Wee carried into his slumbers or perhaps it was the impression that Martin Johnson's vivid description had made upon his subconscious mind.

Whatever it was, he was dreaming and that very hard.

Midnight found him turning about in his blanket dreaming of the land where lions and elephants roam the plains and haunt the jungle. He dreamed that he was in camp with the famous Martin Johnson and that a lion suddenly entered, came over to his bunk and proceeded to lick his face and hands.

He vainly tried to shoo the big cat off but it would not go. He let his chubby fist swing in a supreme effort to fight the marauder and it awakened him.

Something touched his hand. It felt wet and clammy. A hot breath seemed to be upon his face and slowly he opened his eyes. Two points of fire—eyes—the tent seemed to be filled with eyes!

He wanted to cry out. He wasn't sure whether he was still dreaming or not. Everything in the tent seemed quiet enough but he could hear voices somewhere outside. He sat up quickly and a rough wet tongue licked his face.

He screamed, shrill, blood curdling yells. It was a lion! Out of the tent he ran and the ani-

mal after him. Suddenly he heard a voice; familiar. He stumbled against the trunk of the tree and fell kerplunk on top of the big cat.

A light flashed. The animal got down on its haunches and another light flashed. Frantically Pee-Wee tried to step over him but succeeded in getting only his right leg on the animal's back when another light came—a blinding glare.

Catherine's voice came out of the darkness. Then her face appeared behind a powerful searchlight with her brother. Pee-Wee was running back into the tent. "It's all right, Walter!" she called laughingly. "Danny's got the cat so don't be afraid."

Pee-Wee came stealthily out of the tent. By that time he was aware that he had been alone there. The voices of his comrades seemed to be coming up from the circus grounds.

Catherine came up to him laughing, almost hysterically. "What a little hero you are, Walter!" she said. "Do you know I got a splendid picture of you with your foot on Tabby just like some conquering hero of old?"

"Say, what's—what's it all about anyway?" Pee-Wee demanded.

Roy and the rest were coming up, Ben among them. "Don't get so excited," said Catherine soothingly. "Madame Ferelez' pets just got out, that was all. The whole of the village got in a turmoil about it though, they didn't know they were tame.

"You see they had a new keeper and I guess they got lonely to see Danny and they wouldn't stay put. He didn't take very good care of them and they got out—their cages are not as strong as the cages of the untamed ones. Madame Ferelez was frantic and telephoned the house. So Danny rounded up baby Jumbo and Mama Lion and Mr. Lion was in your tent keeping you company while all your scouts were out helping Danny look for him."

"Why didn't they wake me up?" Pee-Wee demanded. "Besides how did you come to take a picture of me?"

"I wanted a picture of him when I saw him this afternoon and when I heard that he had escaped I begged Danny to let me go with him so I could snap him if he was caught. And I didn't dream of getting you along with him too, Walter."

"Say there, kid," said Roy. "I hope you've

had your little Africa. You've had your picture taken with a lion and it's nice and dark so what more do you want? You wouldn't be safe in the real Africa—you sleep too sound. We couldn't wake you up with brickbats so we gave it up. Bridgeboro's the safest place for anyone that sleeps like you do."

After Madame Ferelez' pets were safe under lock and key and Hickson's Crossroads had settled down to slumber once more, Pee-Wee and Ben were discussing the day's events. They were in their blankets within the borders of darkest Africa. The roar of the mighty lion in its jungle was just a memory—no more would he roam that wilderness at will.

"How about it," Ben was saying, "are we going to hit the high road for Bridgeboro tomorrow?"

"You said it," Pee-Wee said sleepily. "But say listen, Ben, I tell you what—let's chuck those marshmallows, huh?"

"Sure, if you say so," Ben agreed. "But what's the idea, kid?"

"Aw gee, I'm sick of them and we bought so many and I ate so many before I went to sleep

that time," Pee-Wee mumbled. "I don't know but I think maybe that's what kept me from waking up—geee whiz, that lion maybe could have killed me for all I'd have known—even if they are tame you never can tell!"

"That's right, kid," laughed Ben. "But just the same we'll chuck them!"

CHAPTER XXVII

PEE-WEE HIMSELF

THURSDAY evening's copy of the *Bugle* contained some very interesting pictures. It was Bridgeboro's only paper and consequently found its way into every home in that thriving community.

At about five o'clock the paper boy rolled a copy into a surprisingly small package and whirled it up on the Harris' porch with a resounding thud. Mrs. Harris came out and picked it up.

At about five-thirty Pee-wee came tearing into the house with Ben Maxwell on his heels. "Gee whiz," the small scout announced precipitately to his mother, "Ben and I are going to scroutch out scroutchsss—we're going to start a drive in Little Valley to-morrow because there's lots of nice fellers in that town and I heard they want to form a patrol so we're going to-morrow because gee whiz, it'll soon be time to go to Temple Camp."

Mrs. Harris smiled and spread the *Bugle* be-

fore her son. "One thing at a time, Walter," she said.

Pee-Wee took it and after glancing at the headlines under Hickson's Crossroads news he and Ben adjourned to the bay window to read it. The only sound that came from that quarter for the next ten minutes was a prolonged, *"Geeee whiz!"*

Suddenly he looked up. "That means I got three patrols there just like I planned on, hey mom?" he roared. "Gee whiz and Mr. Dobbins has dedicated a scout pavilion to his son in recognition of a scout—gee whiz, that's me, ain't it?"

"Isn't it," Mrs. Harris corrected him patiently.

"Anyhow I got to go up there and sign them up!" he shouted joyously. "Gee whiz, it said that the people recognized my bravery, can you beat that?"

"That was because Miss Dobbins had your picture with the lion put in the paper," said Mrs. Harris. "They don't seem to know that it was a tame one."

"Gee whiz, does that matter?" he thundered. "Anyhow it's all right and I'm glad she put it in

now because it's got three patrols and maybe now I'll get selected to go . . ."

"I don't think your father would stand for that, Walter," said Mrs. Harris. "You're a little bit too young to go on any African expedition."

"Especially if he's going to take marshmallows with him," Ben laughed.

Pee-Wee scowled. "Anyhow I don't care so much," he said. "Africa is as dark as Africa was, gee whiz, I don't care so much now anyhow! Catherine said she was going to have that picture enlarged so that'll be dandy and I can show that to people and they'll think that lion was terrible ferocious I bet."

"Only it wasn't," Ben smiled.

"I know it wasn't!" Pee-Wee shouted. "But is that an argument to tell me it wasn't when I know it wasn't!"

"You win, kid," Ben said goodnaturedly. "Even after the flop you thought you had you've won three patrols!"

"Geee whiz!" Pee-Wee murmured. "Geeeee whizzz!"

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